

Crowns and Bridges

Some Frequently Asked Questions...

What are crowns and bridges?

Crowns are artificial coverings designed to improve the appearance of teeth or to restore badly broken down teeth.

Who needs crowns and bridges?

Crowns may be required if the teeth are too badly decayed or broken down and therefore need to be enclosed by the crown, in order to save them. They may also be used to improve the colour or shape of the teeth. Bridges are used to fill up small gaps in the mouth where teeth have been lost or removed.

Can anyone have crowns or bridges?

Crowns or bridges are not usually provided for young patients until the teeth and jaws are fully developed. It is also important that the gums and supporting bone are healthy. Good tooth brushing and the use of dental floss are therefore essential before and following treatment. Your dentist will advise you about this.

What materials are used for crowns and bridges?

Front crowns and bridges will be constructed of porcelain (or other ceramic), or porcelain with a metal backing, to give a natural appearance. Further back in the mouth metal or porcelain, or metal alone, may be used to give greater strength.

How long to crowns and bridges last?

As long as the teeth and gums are maintained by both patient and dentist, crowns and bridges can last for many years. However no absolute guarantee can ever be given and they may need to be replaced in this time. Your dentist is best placed to advise if there are particular reasons that may shorten the normal lifespan of a crown or bridge.

Are there alternatives to crowns and bridges?

In certain circumstances the tooth may be built up with a simple filling as long as there is enough tooth available to support it, but if the tooth is badly broken down, or in very poor shape, then there be no alternative to a crown. Gaps in the mouth may be replaced by dentures or implants instead of a bridge. Please discuss this with your dentist if you are uncertain.

General Advice ~ Crowns and Bridges

This information is only intended as a general guide ~ if you have any questions or want further information please ask your dentist.

- Crowns (sometimes referred to as caps) are used to improve the appearance of teeth or to restore badly broken-down teeth when there is insufficient tooth to hold a filling. They can be made of metal, cast gold, ceramic or a combination of both depending upon the specific needs of the treatment. A bridge is a casting used to replace a missing tooth and is attached to teeth adjacent to the gap, by using adhesive attachments or other crowns.
- Whilst a crown is a strong restoration it is important to be aware that not all crowns can be provided without additional problems. The underlying tooth can still break or it may require root treatment if the nerve of the tooth doesn't settle down after treatment. If further treatment is required this may result in additional costs. Your dentist will advise if there are any particular problems anticipated.
- Placement of a crown or bridge tooth often requires removal of enough tooth tissue to accommodate the thickness of the new crown or bridge restoration. The amount of tooth reduction depends on the type of material being used in the crown; a metal only crown needs less space than a metal & ceramic crown. The different options will also have an effect on the appearance of the final restoration, so often a full ceramic restoration is used at the front of the mouth to improve appearance, whilst a metal crown is used at the back of the mouth where strength is more important. The choice of material will also depend on whether it is an NHS or non-NHS treatment.
- A crown is provided in several stages. After a tooth has been prepared, It is necessary to place a temporary crown whilst dental laboratory manufacturers the crown. Temporary crowns may be in metal or tooth coloured plastic and are designed to last for a short period of time. Temporary crowns are designed to be easily removed. It is important to plan your treatment to take this into account.
- There are alternatives to bridgework, usually either a denture or implants. Your dentist is best place to advise you as to the most suitable alternatives.
- Crowns do not guarantee dental health and require as much if not more maintenance and regular checks than simple fillings. They will need to be replaced throughout life in the same way any other type of dental treatment will need maintenance and updating.
- It is important that you understand why you are having crown or bridge treatment, the cost and the appointments needed. Please do not proceed with the treatment unless you are completely happy to do so.