

If you're missing one or more teeth, you may be aware of their importance to your appearance and dental health. Your teeth work together to help you chew, speak, sing and smile. When you lack teeth, it's difficult to do these things. Fortunately, missing teeth can and should be replaced. You can restore your oral health and your smile with a fixed bridge.

In addition, the gum tissues and the bone that hold teeth in place can break down, increasing the risk of gum disease. Teeth that have tipped are difficult to clean, making them more likely to decay. As a result, even more teeth may be lost.

Missing teeth can also affect the way you chew and speak. Chewing on only one side may cause stress to your mouth. You also need your teeth to speak properly, since they help you make the many sounds needed in speech.

If you need extensive fixed bridge work, your dentist will provide treatment or refer you to a prosthodontist. A prosthodontist is a specialist trained in restoring natural teeth and in replacing missing teeth.

How is a bridge attached?

A fixed bridge is commonly cemented to the natural teeth next to the space left by the missing tooth. A false tooth (called a pontic) replaces the lost tooth. The pontic is attached to the crowns (restorations that cover a tooth). Crowns, which are cemented onto the natural teeth, provide support for the bridge.

Traditional Fixed Bridge



Teeth adjacent to the gap are prepared.



The custom-made bridge is fitted and adjusted.



After adjustments are made, the bridge is cemented into place.

What exactly is a bridge or fixed partial denture?

A bridge (also called a fixed partial denture) is a restoration which replaces or spans the space where one or more teeth have been lost. There are two types of bridges—fixed and removable. Fixed bridges are bonded into place and can only be removed by a dentist. On the other hand, you can take out a removable bridge for cleaning. Removable bridges, while less expensive, may not be as desirable as fixed bridges and are not generally as stable.

Why do I need a bridge?

Your appearance, dental health and the proper functioning of your mouth are all important reasons for wearing a bridge. A bridge helps maintain the natural shape of your face and may help support your lips and cheeks. The loss of a back tooth may cause your mouth to sink and your face to look older.

More importantly, though, your dental health may suffer when teeth are not replaced. Teeth were designed to complement each other. When a tooth is lost, the nearby teeth may tilt toward the empty space, or the teeth in the opposite jaw may move up or down toward the space. This places unusual stress on both the teeth and tissues in your mouth.



Immediately after a tooth is lost



When a tooth is not replaced, the remaining teeth can drift out of position.