From the office of:
Teresa K. Kang, DDS
12332 120th Ave NE
Kirkland, WA 98034
(206) 234-3859

AGD:FACTSHEET

Compiled for you by the Academy of General Dentistry

DENTURES

What is a denture?

A denture is a removable replacement for missing teeth and adjoining tissues. Complete dentures replace all of the teeth, while a partial denture fills in the spaces created by missing teeth and prevents other teeth from shifting position. Complete dentures are either "conventional" or "immediate." A conventional denture is placed in the mouth after all of the teeth have been removed and the extraction sites have healed. An immediate denture is placed as soon as the teeth are removed.

Who needs a denture?

Candidates for complete dentures have lost most or all of their teeth. A partial denture is suitable for those who have some natural teeth remaining. A denture improves chewing ability and speech, and provides support for facial muscles. A denture can greatly enhance a patient's facial appearance and smile.

How do you get a denture?

The denture process takes about one month. There are usually five or more appointments needed to complete the process. The process includes the initial diagnosis; the making of an impression and wax bite to determine the dimensions and proper jaw position; a "try-in" to assure proper color, shape, and fit; placement of the final denture; and any minor adjustments. New denture wearers need time to get accustomed to their new "teeth," because even the best-fitting dentures will feel awkward at first. Your normal speaking ability usually resumes shortly after final denture placement. In addition, in order to become accustomed to chewing with the new denture, it is often recommended that you start with soft, easy-to-chew foods. To ensure proper fit, see your dentist on a regular basis.

How do you care for a denture?

- Remove and brush the denture daily with a denture cleanser or toothpaste and a brush designed specifically for cleaning dentures.
- Avoid using boiling water to sterilize the denture, because hot water can cause the denture to lose its shape.
- If you wear a partial denture, remove it before brushing your natural teeth.
- When you're not wearing the denture, soak it in denture cleanser or water.
- To avoid misplacing your denture, store it in the same place after removal.

Should a denture be worn at night?

While you may be advised to wear your denture almost continually during the first two weeks—even while you sleep—under normal circumstances, it is considered best to remove it at night. Research has shown that removing the denture for at least eight hours during either the day or night allows the gum tissue to rest, and permits for normal stimulation and cleansing of the mouth by the tongue and saliva. This promotes better long-term health of the gums.

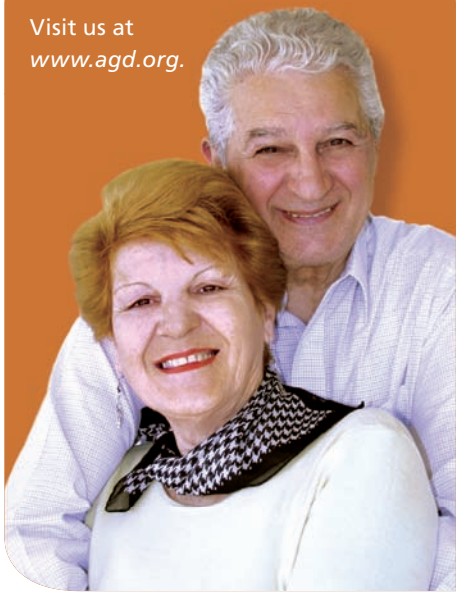
Are there any alternatives to dentures?

Dentures are no longer the only way to restore a mouth that has little or no teeth. Dental implants are artificial tooth roots that are surgically anchored into your jaw to hold a replacement tooth or bridge in place. Implants and bridges may more closely resemble the "feel" of real teeth, but they tend to be more expensive than dentures. Not everyone is a candidate for implants and bridges, however. Talk to your general dentist to learn more.

Do you have questions about dental health?

At the AGD's Web site, you can search more than 300 oral health topics, post a dental question, sign up for e-newletters, find an AGD dentist, and more.

Visit us at *www.agd.org.*



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