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WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT BRIDGES

An empty space, or gap, in your smile may affect your chewing and speaking abilities, as well as your self-confidence. If you're missing one or more teeth, your dentist may recommend a fixed bridge as a treatment option.

What is a bridge?

A fixed bridge is a dental appliance that replaces one or more missing teeth, thus bridging the space between the two adjacent natural teeth or implants. Bridges are made from gold, alloys, porcelain or a combination of these materials.

A traditional fixed bridge consists of a false tooth or teeth fused between two crowns, or caps, that are cemented on the surrounding teeth. An implant bridge is fastened to two or more implants that are submerged in the bone tissue.

Bridges are sometimes called "fixed partial dentures." However, unlike removable partial dentures, bridges cannot be removed by the patient.

Why should I get a bridge?

If you are missing any teeth, the resulting space could cause speech or chewing problems. Missing teeth also can cause your remaining teeth to move out of position. This repositioning can make you more susceptible to tooth decay and gum disease, which can cause further tooth loss. A fixed bridge can replace those missing teeth, correcting your bite, and improving your chewing and speaking abilities. A bridge also can help to maintain the natural shape of your face.

It's vital for patients with bridges to maintain their oral health. If you have a bridge, it's more important than ever to brush for two minutes, twice a day, and to see your dentist every six months.

What is the total treatment time?

There are several steps required and several dental visits needed in order for your dentist to create a bridge that meets both your functional and esthetic needs. The total treatment time for a bridge is usually two to four weeks, depending on the type of bridge you receive.

How do I care for a bridge?

The success of a bridge depends on its foundation – the abutment teeth or implants – so it's vital for patients with bridges to maintain their oral health. If you have a bridge, it's more important than ever to brush for two minutes, twice a day, and to see your dentist every six months. Your dentist also might recommend that you use floss threaders to reach the spaces between the bridge and the adjacent teeth and gums. With proper care, your fixed bridge should last as long as eight to 10 years or even longer.

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