

Repairing Damaged Teeth - *Crowns*

by Scott F. Kenward, DMD

When damage to a person's teeth is extreme, we can use porcelain or porcelain fused to gold crowns to restore the teeth and make the smile appear "as new". Crowns are a very reliable solution for major dental problems caused through accidents, diseases or wear and tear.

Material used in these restorations is either high-grade porcelain, or porcelain bonded to gold. The higher strength of these materials is recommended to restore the missing tooth structure, as well as protect the remainder of the tooth from further breakdown.

What are the Capabilities of Crowns?

Where accidental damage has occurred, or where teeth have broken away through excessive wear, or as the result of old fillings breaking, crowns can be used as a long-term solution.

Many people have unexplained pain from filled back teeth, which is usually due to hairline cracks in the chewing part of the tooth. Placing crowns on these teeth relieves the pain and allows a return of full dental function for these teeth. In front teeth, older fillings can both weaken the teeth and cause "appearance" problems due to staining or chipping.

Porcelain crowns are suitable in cases where porcelain veneers are not. In teeth with root canal fillings, crowns can prevent breakage.

Why Crowns Instead of Fillings?

When a tooth has an old deteriorated filling or one with new decay around it, a new restoration is required. A decision needs to be made; do we replace the filling with a new one, or do we place a crown or onlay (partial crown)?

This decision is based on the relative amount of strong, healthy tooth structure remaining *after* the old filling, decay and corrosion are cleaned out. If enough solid tooth structure is available to support a filling, we choose that simpler, less involved alternative. If, however, the remaining tooth is severely undermined, broken down or hollowed-out, it needs to be protected with a restoration which encases and protects the weakened tooth. This will help resist further cracking or fracture, which could then cause the need for root canal treatment, gum surgery or even tooth loss.

Crowns are among the most durable and natural-appearing of all dental restorations. It is usual for these restorations to last for 15-plus years, which is as close to permanent as dental treatment can get.

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How Long Does it Take?

Fitting a crown normally requires two visits to the office. Initially, the dentist will remove decay, shape the tooth, and fit it with a temporary crown made of an acrylic material.

On the subsequent visit your dentist will remove the temporary crown, and then fit and adjust the final crown. Finally, your new restoration will be cemented into place.

Key Benefits of Crowns

- Offers structural support to misshapen teeth or badly broken teeth
- Looks completely natural
- Fixes "smile" and functional chewing problems.

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