

# Diagnosing for **Bridges**

When teeth are missing, a fixed bridge is a good choice for replacing them. A dental bridge is a great way to maintain a stable bite and restore your beautiful smile. It can also prevent a chain reaction of problems, including:

- ❖ Shifting teeth
- ❖ Difficulty keeping teeth free of plaque and bacteria
- ❖ Loss of bone in the jaw
- ❖ Difficulty chewing
- ❖ Grinding and clenching
- ❖ Pain in the jaw joint, the TMJ



*Shifting teeth*



*Before and after*



*A bridge maintains proper alignment*

## Why missing teeth need to be replaced

Teeth need each other for support. When you lose a tooth, the biting forces change on the teeth next to the space, causing the teeth to shift. In addition, the opposing teeth no longer have anything to chew against, so they may begin to extrude out of their sockets. These changes create places around the teeth that are hard to keep clean, so plaque and bacteria accumulate quickly. This accumulation can cause tooth decay and periodontal disease.

Changes in the bite can also put improper chewing forces on the shifted teeth, and this can lead to loose teeth and loss of jawbone, especially when periodontal disease is already present in your mouth. An uneven bite makes it harder to chew your food and may lead to grinding and clenching. A bad bite can also create painful problems with your jaw joint, the TMJ.

## Determining the need for a bridge

To determine if a bridge is right for you, we'll perform a thorough examination to make sure that the surrounding teeth are healthy and can provide a strong foundation for a bridge. The exam often includes taking x-rays and probing around the teeth to check for periodontal disease.

There are several kinds of bridges, so we'll talk with you about the best type for your situation. We can then begin the steps necessary to create and place your new bridge.