

Tooth Talk

Hey Doc, I like to replace my missing teeth. What are my options? (Part 2- removable dentures)

Removable dentures are very popular in our society for replacing missing teeth. They can be divided into 3 categories: temporary, partial, full dentures.

A "temporary" denture is commonly fabricated ahead of time and then inserted into one's mouth on the same day the teeth are removed. It allows one to have the missing teeth replaced right away at the start of the healing phase. Once the healing is complete, one can then have a better fitting, longer-lasting prosthesis to replace the missing teeth.

A "partial" denture can be made to replace one or more missing teeth. It contains a plastic or metal framework with false tooth/teeth on it. It also has clasps (clips), metal or plastic, that anchor onto the remaining teeth for support and stability.

A "full" denture, top or bottom, consists of just a plastic plate with false teeth on it. It relies on suction between the plastic and one's gum tissue to stay in place. Full upper denture covers the roof of the mouth (palate) for support and is, generally speaking, relatively stable.

Full lower denture, on the other hand, quite often can be a challenge to keep in place. This is because the floor of the mouth moves the full lower denture around and there is less jaw bone to support the lower denture due to more rapid and extensive jaw bone shrinkage after lower teeth are removed.

"Advantages" of removable dentures include:

- the ability to replace multiple teeth or all the teeth
- the ability to replace missing teeth on both sides of the mouth with just one prosthesis
- the capability of being removed by the patient so that he or she can carry out proper hygiene care on the remaining teeth
- more economical and affordable than the fixed options
- the prosthesis can be made in a relatively short period of time etc.

"Disadvantages" of removable dentures include:

- may not be as esthetic as the fixed options, primarily due to the metal clasps showing
- require patients to put in time and effort to get used to having something "foreign" in their mouths
- may not be as comfortable as the fixed options due to denture irritation on the supporting gum tissue as a result of continual bone/gum recession
- not permanent, requiring the patient to take the prosthesis in and out everyday
- the clasps on the partial denture can catch and retain food, causing the anchor teeth to be more prone to decay
- reduced biting force and chewing efficiency, especially with full dentures -etc.

In summary, if one is missing multiple teeth and is on a limited budget, a removable denture is a great option for replacing the missing teeth for esthetics or function.

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