



# Crowns, Bridges & Veneers

## Patient Information





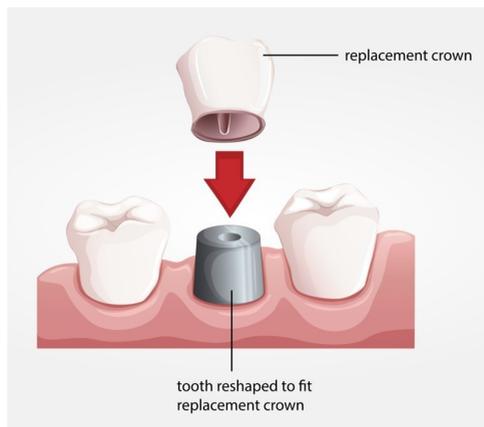
## What are crowns?

A crown is an artificial tooth-shaped restoration that fits over the patient's prepared tooth and is secured in place with cementing chemicals. A crown is sometimes known as a 'cap'.

Crowns can be used to restore the appearance of a tooth, or to strengthen a broken or heavily filled tooth. Having a crown on your tooth is an investment in protecting a tooth's health for many years.

The three most important factors of a crown are strength, accurate fit and appearance. Crowns can be made from precious metals or ceramic materials, or a combination of both. Modern crowns match natural teeth, making it difficult for people to know that you have a replacement tooth.

Your dentist will discuss the different options to make the best choice for your situation.



## Why is a Dental Crown Needed?

A dental crown may be needed when at least one of the following occurs:

- To protect a tooth weakened after root canal treatment.
- To restore an already broken tooth or a tooth that has been severely worn down.
- To cover and support a tooth with a large filling when there isn't a lot of tooth left.
- To hold a dental bridge in place.
- To cover misshaped or severely discoloured teeth.
- To cover a dental implant.

## What are crowns made of?

Crowns can be made of several different materials. Numerous factors are considered when determining the crown material that is best for your particular tooth, including the colour, bite, shape, space, and location of the tooth in your mouth. Your dentist will discuss with you the options suitable for your particular case and advise what is available on the NHS and what is available as a private option.

### Gold/Metal Crowns

These crowns have been around for a very long time and have the best track record of any crown material. The alloy is composed of several metals to give the best balance of strength, durability and accuracy of fit. They are best suited for patients with heavy bites. The disadvantage of this type of crown is the obvious - it doesn't look like a natural tooth and as such is usually used on back teeth.



### Porcelain fused to metal (PFM)

This has been the traditional way to produce a tooth-coloured crown and as such is the most common crown that we currently find in peoples mouths. A metal base is made to provide strength and this is coated in a layer of tooth coloured porcelain. The shade of the porcelain is matched to your existing teeth. The advantage of these crowns is that they are very strong and can look very natural. The disadvantage is that the metal that lies underneath the crown's porcelain surface can sometimes be seen as a dark line right at the crown's edge. A dentist will try to position the edge of the crown just underneath the tooth's gum line. But, if later down the line the patients gums recede, this dark line can show, thus spoiling the crown's appearance. It is not unusual for us to have patients with very old crowns ask to have them replaced due to their gum recession.



### All Ceramic - E-MAX

E-MAX crowns are made from lithium desilicated ceramic, a material that has been harvested for its appealing translucent colour, strength and durability. As a result, you get a crown that is tough and durable, but looks exactly like your other teeth. These are an especially good option for front teeth.



### All Ceramic - Solid Zirconia

Sometimes you might need a stronger crown than the porcelain fused to metal option. This is where the Zirconia crown comes in. It is the toughest metal free crown that you can have. Crowns are milled from a solid block of zirconia. They are extremely strong and hard wearing and are a good option for tooth grinders! Zirconia is not as translucent as porcelain and Emax ceramic crowns and are often used for back teeth.



### Porcelain fused to Zirconia (PFZ)

Porcelain fused to zirconia crowns have a durable inner Zirconia Core with the aesthetics of porcelain layer on the outside. These are more translucent and opalescent to solid zirconia crowns and are therefore popular for front teeth.



## What is the procedure?

Two appointments will be needed. The first appointment is to prepare your tooth and the second shorter appointment is to fit the new crown:

### Prep Appointment

Local anaesthetic will be administered to numb up your tooth and the surrounding gum. If the tooth has previously been root filled it won't need numbing as the nerve has been removed.

- A certain amount of the tooth's structure needs to be removed to enable the new crown to fit. Your dentist will use a drill to trim all sides of the tooth and to remove any decay that is present.
- Once the tooth is prepared, impressions will be taken to be sent to the laboratory making the crown. These will be used by a skilled dental technician, who will craft your crown so that it is a perfect fit. The technician will also ensure the colour of the crown matches your own teeth, so that it is virtually indistinguishable from them.
- Finally a temporary crown will be fitted. This will protect your tooth and keep it from shifting position. You will wear the temporary crown for a period of approximately 2 weeks until your fit appointment. If the temporary crown comes off before your fit appointment please give us a call to arrange to have it refitted. This is important to ensure that your final crown will fit properly.

### Fit Appointment

At the second appointment, the temporary crown is removed and the final crown is firmly secured into place.

## **How should I care for my teeth after I receive a Crown?**

To prevent damaging or fracturing the crown, avoid chewing extremely hard foods and ice. You also should avoid grinding or clenching your teeth.

In addition to brushing twice a day and visiting your dentist regularly, cleaning between your teeth is essential if you have crowns. Use floss or interdental cleaners (specially shaped brushes and sticks) to remove plaque from the crown area where the gum meets the tooth. This process helps to prevent both dental decay and gum disease.

## **Will my Crown or Bridge ever need to be replaced?**

The life of a crown will depend on how well it is looked after. The crown itself cannot decay, but decay can start where the edge of the crown joins the tooth. It is very important to keep this area as clean as your other teeth. To maximise the crowns life span ensure you have a sensible diet and maintain good oral hygiene at home and with regular visits to your dentist and hygienist.

While a crown or bridge can last a long time, they do sometimes come loose or fall out. If this happens, keep hold of it and arrange an appointment to have it refitted.

## **Will my Crown be visible?**

When placing a crown, we carefully match the colour to your surrounding teeth. It will be virtually indistinguishable from your natural teeth.

## **What is the difference between a Crown and a Bridge?**

A crown is used to restore an existing tooth back to its natural appearance whereas a bridge uses surrounding teeth to help fill the gap of a missing tooth. Bridges and crowns differ from dentures, as they are fixed prosthetics.

## Should I replace my old Crowns?

Crowns are very durable but just like your own teeth they can become worn down or stained over time. The decision to replace a crown depends on a number of factors:

- If over the years the gum recedes and the exposed root surface develops a cavity, then the crown may need to be removed so your dentist can deal with the decay.
- If you choose to have tooth whitening, existing crowns will not change colour and you may choose to have them replaced.
- Crowns can break or chip just like natural teeth. If you notice any damage, always get it checked by your dentist as it is important that the seal of the crown over the tooth is kept intact.
- Over time, the gum line may recede. If enough recession takes place the edge of the crown that was initially tucked out of sight under the gum line will become visible. This often looks like a dark line, see the before and after photos below.



## What are bridges?

There are several options for replacing missing teeth – dental implants, a denture and a bridge. If spaces are left unfilled they may cause the surrounding teeth to drift out of position altering your bite (the way your upper and lower teeth bite together). Replacing a missing tooth also prevents excess strain on the teeth either side of the gap, can improve appearance and help prevent increased gum disease and decay from food accumulating in the gap.

Dental bridges are a fixed method of replacing one or more teeth. There are different types of bridges and the type recommended depends on individual circumstances.

### Conventional Bridges

These bridges consist of one or more artificial teeth which are fused between two crowns. These dental crowns are cemented on to the teeth adjacent to your missing tooth.

Conventional bridges can be used when you have natural teeth on both sides of the gap created by your missing tooth.



The downside of these bridges as a solution to missing teeth is that your dentist will need to prepare the adjacent teeth by removing their enamel to make room for the crowns that will be cemented on top. This is not normally advised if the adjacent teeth are healthy and free of decay or if they are of poor prognosis. However, they are a less costly tooth replacement option than dental implants.

As with crowns, once you have a bridge fitted, you will have to take extra care of your daily hygiene regime to prevent problems such as bad breath and gum disease. You also have to clean under the false tooth every day. Your dentist or hygienist will show you how to do this using a special floss, as a normal toothbrush cannot reach this area.

## What is the procedure for this type of bridge?

The procedure for fitting a conventional bridge is the same as for crowns. (see page 6).

## What are these bridges made of?

As with crowns these can be made from a few different materials, usually porcelain bonded to metal or porcelain bonded to zirconia.

## How long will my Bridge last?

Conventional dental bridges can last 10-15 years or even longer, dependant upon the level of care and hygiene.

## Maryland Bridges

A Maryland bridge consists of a metal framework, a bit like wings, with a porcelain tooth attached to the front of it. The wings are attached to the back of the teeth on either side of the missing tooth. This type of bridge is suitable for anterior teeth where teeth are under less stress than molars.

The biggest advantage of this type of bridge is that there is minimal or no requirement to remove any of the natural structure of the teeth either side of the missing tooth. It is a relatively quick solution to implement, however as it is only supported by the posterior side of the adjacent teeth it can be used only in a limited number of situations.



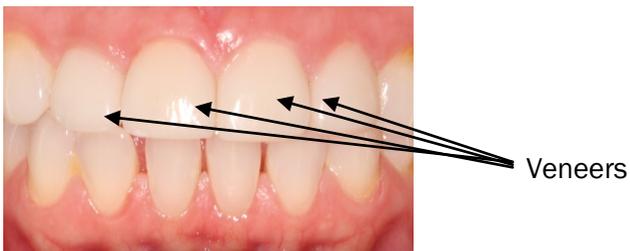
## What are Veneers?

A veneer is a thin piece of tooth coloured material (porcelain or pressed ceramic) cemented to the front surface of your natural tooth to mask any imperfections that make you feel self-conscious. Veneers can be used on teeth that are badly discoloured and can't be brightened by tooth whitening, chipped or worn teeth and crooked or misshapen teeth.

Before placing a veneer, a small amount of enamel needs to be removed from the tooth to contour a smooth appearance for when we place the veneer. It is therefore important to know that because a portion of the original tooth enamel is reduced, a veneer is not considered a reversible treatment. You can never return to the original condition of the tooth.

## What is the procedure?

The process is similar to that of crowns and bridges. You will require two appointments, one to prepare the tooth and take impressions and the second to fit the veneer.



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