



Dental Bridges

Replacing Missing Teeth and Restoring Your Smile

What Is a Dental Bridge?

A **dental bridge** is a fixed dental restoration used to replace one or more missing teeth. It literally "bridges" the gap left by missing teeth by attaching an artificial tooth (or teeth) to neighboring natural teeth or dental implants.

Replacing missing teeth can improve chewing, speech, appearance, and help maintain the alignment of the remaining teeth.

Why Replace a Missing Tooth?

When a tooth is lost, the surrounding teeth may gradually begin to shift into the empty space.

Over time, this may lead to:

- Changes in your bite
- Difficulty chewing
- Increased wear on remaining teeth
- Problems with speech
- Changes in facial appearance
- Additional dental complications

Replacing missing teeth helps restore normal function and supports long-term oral health.

What Is a Dental Bridge Made Of?

A bridge usually consists of:

- One or more **artificial teeth (pontics)**
- Supporting crowns or attachments on neighboring teeth or implants

Modern bridges are commonly made from:

- Porcelain
- Ceramic
- Zirconia
- Porcelain fused to metal

Your dentist will recommend the material that best fits your individual needs.

Types of Dental Bridges

Traditional Bridge

This is the most common type.

It uses crowns placed on the natural teeth located on both sides of the missing tooth.

A replacement tooth is permanently attached between them.

Implant-Supported Bridge

Instead of relying on neighboring natural teeth, this type of bridge is supported by **dental implants**.

It may be recommended when several adjacent teeth are missing.

Cantilever Bridge

A cantilever bridge is supported by a tooth on only one side of the missing space.

Today, it is used less frequently because it places greater stress on the supporting tooth.

Maryland Bridge

A Maryland bridge uses small metal or ceramic "wings" bonded to the backs of neighboring teeth.

It may be appropriate in selected situations, particularly for replacing certain front teeth.

How Is a Dental Bridge Placed?

Treatment usually involves two or more appointments.

First Appointment

Your dentist will:

- Examine your teeth
 - Prepare the supporting teeth (if needed)
 - Take impressions or a digital scan
 - Place a temporary bridge when appropriate
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Laboratory Fabrication

A dental laboratory custom-makes the permanent bridge to fit your mouth.

Final Placement

Your dentist:

- Removes the temporary restoration
- Checks the fit and bite
- Permanently cements or secures the bridge

The finished restoration is designed to look and function like natural teeth.

Benefits of Dental Bridges

Dental bridges may:

- Restore chewing function
- Improve speech
- Replace missing teeth

- Help maintain facial appearance
- Prevent neighboring teeth from shifting
- Improve confidence when smiling

Many patients return to normal eating and speaking shortly after treatment.

Caring for a Dental Bridge

A bridge requires the same daily care as natural teeth.

Good oral hygiene includes:

- Brushing twice daily with fluoride toothpaste
- Cleaning around and underneath the bridge every day
- Using floss threaders or interdental brushes when recommended
- Visiting your dentist regularly

Proper cleaning helps protect both the bridge and the supporting teeth.

How Long Does a Dental Bridge Last?

The lifespan of a bridge depends on:

- Oral hygiene
- Diet
- Bite forces
- Teeth grinding
- Regular dental care

Many bridges function successfully for **10–15 years or longer**, although individual results vary.

Routine dental examinations help monitor the health of both the bridge and the supporting teeth.

Dental Bridge vs. Dental Implant

Both bridges and implants are effective options for replacing missing teeth.

A bridge may be appropriate when:

- Neighboring teeth already require crowns
- Implant placement is not suitable
- A faster treatment option is preferred

A dental implant may preserve more natural tooth structure because it usually does not require preparing neighboring teeth.

Your dentist will discuss the advantages and limitations of each option.

Common Myths

"A missing tooth doesn't need to be replaced."

Not always.

Missing teeth can affect chewing, speech, bite alignment, and the position of neighboring teeth.

"A bridge doesn't require cleaning."

False.

Plaque can accumulate around the bridge and supporting teeth, increasing the risk of cavities and gum disease.

"Dental bridges look unnatural."

False.

Modern bridges are designed to closely match the color, shape, and appearance of natural teeth.

Key Takeaways

- ✓ Dental bridges replace one or more missing teeth.
 - ✓ Bridges restore chewing, speech, and appearance.
 - ✓ Proper daily cleaning is essential for long-term success.
 - ✓ Several bridge designs are available depending on your needs.
 - ✓ Dental bridges and implants are both effective treatment options.
 - ✓ Your dentist can help determine which solution is most appropriate for your individual situation.
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References

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