

What are Dental Crowns?

What are Dental Crowns and Tooth Bridges?

Both crowns and most bridges are fixed prosthetic devices. Unlike removable devices such as dentures, which you can take out and clean daily, crowns and bridges are cemented onto existing teeth or implants, and can only be removed by a dentist.

Crowns



Full porcelain fused to metal. Full cast gold crown.

How do Crowns Work?

A crown is used to entirely cover or "[cap](#)" a damaged tooth. Besides strengthening a damaged tooth, a crown can be used to improve its appearance, shape or alignment. A crown can also be placed on top of an implant to provide a tooth-like shape and structure for function. [Porcelain](#) or ceramic crowns can be matched to the color of your natural teeth. Other materials include gold and metal alloys, acrylic and ceramic. These alloys are generally stronger than porcelain and may be recommended for back teeth. Porcelain bonded to a metal shell is often used because it is both strong and attractive.

Your dentist may recommend a crown to:

- Replace a large filling when there isn't enough tooth remaining
- Protect a weak tooth from fracturing
- Restore a fractured tooth
- Attach a bridge
- Cover a [dental implant](#)
- Cover a discolored or poorly shaped tooth
- Cover a tooth that has had [root canal](#) treatment

How are Crowns and Bridges Made?

Before either a crown or a bridge can be made, the tooth (or teeth) must be reduced in size so that the crown or bridge will fit over it properly. After reducing the tooth/teeth, your dentist will take an [impression](#) to provide an exact mold for the crown or bridge. If porcelain is to be used, your dentist will determine the correct shade for the crown or bridge to match the color of your existing teeth.

Using this impression, a dental lab then makes your crown or bridge, in the material your dentist specifies. A [temporary crown](#) or bridge will be put in place to cover the prepared tooth while the permanent crown or bridge is being made. When the permanent crown or bridge is ready, the temporary crown or bridge is removed, and the new crown or bridge is cemented over your prepared tooth or teeth.

How Long do Crowns and Bridges Last?

While crowns and bridges can last a lifetime, they do sometimes come loose or fall out. The most important step you can take to ensure the longevity of your crown or bridge is to practice good [oral hygiene](#). A bridge can lose its support if the teeth or bone holding it in place are damaged by dental disease. Keep your [gums](#) and teeth healthy by [brushing](#) with [fluoride](#) toothpaste twice a day and [flossing](#) daily. Also see your dentist and [hygienist](#) regularly for checkups and professional cleanings.

To prevent damage to your new crown or bridge, avoid chewing hard foods, ice or other hard objects.