

DENTURE CARE

Now that you've taken a significant step toward restoring your smile and ability to eat, please take care of your new denture *and* your mouth by following these tips and home-care instructions.

And remember: New dentures often feel bulky and awkward at first, which is normal. When we deliver your new denture, you can expect an initial adjustment period of two to four weeks.

Eating and Speaking

Dentures are very different from your natural teeth because they aren't anchored in bone; they rest on top of mobile tissue. This means your denture—especially the lower one—can and will move in your mouth when you eat and speak. Just be patient! With time and practice, your muscles will adapt.

Eating

A complete set of dentures generates approximately 20 to 25% of the chewing force of natural teeth—so eating with your new denture will take some getting used to. The following tips should help ease the process:

- Start with soft, easy-to-chew foods such as fish, cheese, eggs, chopped meat, cooked vegetables, ice cream, and pudding.
- Take small bites.
- Chew on both sides of your mouth at the same time, which helps to stabilize the denture.
- Avoid bringing your lower front teeth forward against your upper front teeth to cut or incise foods. This protects the upper front ridge and prevents denture tipping.
- Try chewing vertically (up and down) rather than horizontally (side to side).
- Slice foods like apples and corn on the cob before eating. Biting into food is difficult with dentures and tends to dislodge an upper denture.
- If you find it necessary to bite using your front teeth, try spreading the tongue against the back of your upper denture to keep it in place.

- Dentures *decrease* temperature sensation, so avoid very hot foods and drinks to prevent burns.

Speaking

Speech difficulties are very common when wearing a brand-new denture or pair of dentures, especially when pronouncing words containing “s” and “f” sounds.

Your ability to function with a complete denture involves neuromuscular skills that take time to develop. All new denture wearers require this adjustment period.

The muscles of the tongue, lips, and cheeks must learn to coordinate movement to allow for normal speech. You can speed up the learning process with practice.

- Practice reading aloud and speaking in front of a mirror.
- You may find it helpful to swallow before speaking in order to “set” your denture in place.

Sore Spots

Don’t panic! Having a few sore spots that require adjustment, especially within the first few days of wearing a new denture, is quite common.

Typically, we will see you one week after delivery to evaluate your gums and adjust the denture as necessary. For some patients, this is the only adjustment necessary; for others, multiple adjustments are needed before the denture is comfortable.

If you develop any sore areas, do the following:

- Make a soothing mouth rinse by mixing $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon of baking soda and $\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon of salt with 1 cup of very warm water. Rinse frequently.
- Call our office for an appointment so we can make any necessary adjustments to help eliminate the sore spots. Be sure to wear your denture the day of your appointment to help us identify the sore areas of your mouth.
- We will want to check your denture at least once annually because changes in your mouth—such as shrinkage and bone loss—will occur over time. Careful maintenance and routine checkups will help slow down these changes.

Looseness

If your teeth were extracted immediately prior to receiving your denture, gum shrinkage from the normal healing process will cause it to feel loose over time.

Here are some important things to remember:

- A denture reline procedure, whether in our office or by our lab, will be necessary once your healing is complete. During a reline, material is added to the underside of the denture.
- Over time, your denture may need to be relined once again to fit more securely against your gums.
- *Never try* to adjust or repair a denture yourself; doing so could cause irreversible damage to it!

Adhesives

Over time, as mentioned above, you'll experience some bone and gum shrinkage, causing your denture to feel loose. When this happens, you may need to use a denture adhesive to help your denture feel more stable.

Caring for your Denture

Keeping your denture clean is critical. Just like natural teeth, dentures can build up plaque and tartar that will irritate your gums, stain your denture teeth, and harbor bacteria and fungus.

You'll need to clean your denture daily. (Before cleaning, be sure to fill the sink with water or lay a soft towel down—a denture can break if it falls on a hard surface.)

Cleaning Tips

- Place your denture in a bath of water every night, and use a denture-soaking solution once or twice a week.
- Brush your denture daily to help prevent plaque buildup. Use a soft toothbrush or denture brush and use denture paste—regular toothpaste is too abrasive and can cause scratches in the acrylic.

- If you have an overdenture with natural tooth attachments or one supported by dental implants, brush inside your mouth at least twice a day and floss once a day around the supporting teeth. The teeth supporting an overdenture are still susceptible to decay and must receive proper care. Although dental implants cannot decay, periodontal disease may still develop without good home care.
- Rinse your mouth and the denture with warm water after eating to help reduce plaque build-up and food debris. *Do not* use boiling or very hot water; doing so can cause the denture to warp and affect the fit.
- Soak your denture in water using denture-cleaning tablets to help remove light stains and loosen plaque buildup. After soaking, be sure to rinse it thoroughly under warm water before reinserting it into your mouth.

Denture Care Tips

- When traveling, or if you remove your denture temporarily, *always* place it in a denture case to keep from losing it. *Never* place it on a napkin or tissue. We have had patients accidentally throw away their dentures after placing them on a napkin, paper towel, or tissue for “just a moment.”
- Dog owners: Please keep your denture out of reach of your dog! We cannot emphasize enough that your dog will think your denture is a chew toy and destroy it given the opportunity!
- *Never* use Clorox (bleach) based cleansers of any kind.
- Avoid biting against your upper front denture teeth to prevent breaking them.
- *Immediate denture*: If you’ve received your denture the day of your extractions, remember to leave it in place during the first 24 hours.
- *Overdenture*: Dentures made over implants or over the roots of teeth left in the ridges require extra care:
 - Use a fluoride toothpaste to clean your gums around the implants or remaining roots.

- Fluoride rinses and in-office treatments will help prevent new areas of decay in your remaining roots.
- More frequent recall appointments are necessary to maintain implants and supporting roots.

Care for Your Mouth and Gums

- Give your gums a break! *Never* sleep with your dentures in place unless we specifically request that you do so. Your dentures should be removed during sleep to allow for better blood circulation to your gums and to minimize bone loss.
- When not wearing your denture, always keep it in water or a denture solution; otherwise, the acrylic will dry out over time, affecting the fit and causing it to become brittle.
- While your denture is out of your mouth, use a damp washcloth or very soft toothbrush with warm water (or warm salt water) to clean your gums. Clean the ridges where your denture sits along with your tongue, lips, cheeks, and roof of your mouth. Rinsing daily with warm salt water will help keep your gums clean.

If you have any questions about your new denture or need an adjustment, please call our office to schedule an appointment. We're here to help!

Additional Resources

You may find the following links* helpful.

www.denturewearers.com

www.denturehelp.com

www.dentureliving.com

**Our inclusion of these website links is for informational purposes only and does not constitute an endorsement of the material contained within them.*