

# Fixed bridges



## What are they?

A bridge fixes a replacement tooth (or teeth) to one or more remaining natural teeth or implants. Some bridges have crowns at each end. Others are fixed to the surface of the teeth next to the gap. Sometimes a bridge is only fixed to the tooth on one side of the gap.

Bridges are made of metal and porcelain or sometimes just porcelain.

## What will my dentist do?

**There are several stages in making a bridge:**

- The dentist uses a soft, mouldable material to take impressions of your mouth. A dental technician makes exact plaster models of your upper and lower teeth and gums, which show how your teeth bite together.
- The teeth that will support the bridge are cut/adjusted to take the fixings and to make sure that the bridge is not too bulky.
- Another impression is taken of the teeth and any gaps, and the dental technician uses this to make the bridge. A plastic temporary bridge or temporary crown may be fitted in the meantime.
- At your final visit, the dentist will check that the bridge fits, make any minor adjustments and then fix it permanently in place. Your dentist or hygienist will show you the best way of keeping your new bridge clean. This is important to ensure that your bridge will last.

## What are the benefits?

- A bridge lets you almost forget that you have missing teeth.
- It can improve the way you look, bite, chew and speak.
- The teeth can be matched to the colour of your own teeth.
- A bridge can last many years if you keep it and the adjacent soft tissue clean and if there is no accidental damage.
- Natural teeth are protected from wear and tear, and from moving or tilting out of line, which could cause your teeth to bite together incorrectly.

## Other options

It may be possible to restore small spaces with one or more dental implants. This has the advantage that adjacent teeth do not need to be cut, but the disadvantage that a surgical procedure is required, and treatment time may be extended. Implants are not widely available within the NHS, except in very rare situations, where they are provided in a hospital.

Another option for a small space could be a 'minimum preparation bridge' or 'resin-retained' bridge, where the false tooth is held in place with a wing that is bonded onto adjacent teeth. This involves less destruction of tooth tissue but can require later refitting, repair or replacement.

Your dentist can advise if a new 'fibre-reinforced' type of resin or 'sticky' bridge is suitable for you.

Longer, or multiple, spaces may be restored with acrylic or metal partial dentures. These are removable and so are easier to keep clean; it's also easier to clean the adjacent natural teeth. However, some patients find dentures difficult to tolerate.