



WHAT ARE PARTIAL DENTURES?

Partial dentures are a low cost way of replacing a missing tooth or teeth. They are often done as a temporary measure while patients are waiting for an implant to integrate with the bone, or for economic reasons i.e. to reduce expense where a permanent tooth replacement is required. A partial denture replaces several teeth, whereas a full denture replaces all the teeth in the upper and/or lower jaw. They are made from either plastic or metal.

HOW DO PARTIAL DENTURES HOLD ON TO THE TEETH?

The partial denture has the replacement false tooth/teeth adhered to it and some metal clips protrude from this. The clips are positioned to grip onto your existing teeth and this is what holds everything in place.

HOW WILL THE DENTURE FEEL?

The partial denture tends to be a bit frustrating and difficult part of modern dentistry. They are uncomfortable and difficult for some patients to accept. It is very hard to predict the way in which the patient will feel after they are given a new partial denture. Some patients take to them readily, others have a harder time accepting something foreign in their mouth. If your partial denture is of the chrome cobalt (metal) type, it should be a lot more comfortable, accurate and less bulky than a plastic (acrylic) one. You may find that your partial denture is sufficiently comfortable for you as a long term solution to replacing missing teeth.

WHAT PROBLEMS ARE ENCOUNTERED WITH PARTIAL DENTURES?

The gum and bone underneath the denture changes with time and this can lead to an uneven foundation developing as time goes by and is particularly noticeable in the first 3-6 months after extraction of teeth. As the top of the ridge resorbs more than the side of the ridge or the palate, the denture can become loose over time and may need relining or even remaking altogether.

It is difficult to get the dentures to stay in adequately without providing metal clips holding onto several teeth. To provide the best retention, these clips may be visible when you smile. Different types of clips can be used; however they may not be the best solution for good retention of the denture. These metal clips tend to lose their grasp on the tooth with time due to the metallurgy of the wire, thus allowing the denture to become loose. Clips can be tightened from time to time by your dentist. Never adjust these clips yourself as they may break.

Denture teeth come in a large variety of colours whereas natural teeth come in an infinite number of colours. It is possible that your denture teeth will not match your natural teeth perfectly.

Because most top dentures cover most of the palate the sense of taste can be adversely affected.

Partial dentures always increase the probability of gum disease due to the fact that they remove the natural flushing action of saliva and the cleaning action of the tongue. They are very good at trapping plaque and food and therefore should be removed and cleaned after every meal or snack.

Even with meticulous oral hygiene, patients who wear partial dentures for long periods of time tend



to suffer more gum disease. It is important to leave your dentures out at night (or at least some time during the day) to give your gums and surrounding teeth 'a rest' from the pressures a partial denture places on the mouth.

Patients who have dentures covering the roof of their mouths often initially suffer from lisps and difficulty in pronouncing some words. This is because the tongue is programmed to meet the palate at a certain point in space and two millimetres of plastic causes an upset to the established patterns of speech. The plastic cannot be made thinner because it will reduce the strength leading to more breakages. In most cases, the tongue will re-train after a few weeks and speech will become relatively normal. Many patients also complain of the bulky feeling in their mouth and you should be prepared for this.

CLEANING

Cleaning the denture thoroughly is very important and this can be done with normal toothpaste and toothbrush. Special denture cleaning brushes can be bought at the chemist or supermarket. Over time the denture may collect stain. Dentures can be soaked in 'denture cleaning solutions' but make sure you follow the instruction carefully as they can cause issues with the denture if used incorrectly.