



DENTAL TIPS

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Replacement Options for Missing Teeth

In another article, I explained the importance of replacing missing teeth. To review, replacement of missing teeth stops the movement (drifting) of the remaining teeth. This drifting can lead to the loss of more teeth and the eventual breakdown of the mouth. There are several options to replace teeth that are missing. I will briefly discuss them here. Check with your dentist to see which is best for you.

Dental implants: These are used to replace one or several missing teeth. They are comprised of several components that fit together. The implant cylinder is placed directly into the jawbone and functions exactly as does the root of a tooth! A customized cap (or crown) is placed onto the implant utilizing a support called the abutment. Implants are currently considered the best choice for tooth replacement, but they are expensive and are not always covered by insurance. They do require a basic surgical procedure and several months of healing time. Some patients are ideal candidates for implants while others are not.

Bridges: These are the traditional way to replace missing teeth. They are permanently cemented into place and are not removable. They are supported by teeth that are adjacent to the missing tooth (or teeth). The supporting teeth must be modified to fit below crowns. Bridges are a good option if the supporting teeth are somewhat broken down and would benefit from being crowned. Bridges are usually at least partially covered by most dental insurance plans.

Partial dentures: These are usually used to replace multiple missing teeth. They are removable by the patient and must be taken out to clean. They are the most economical way to replace missing teeth and most insurance plans cover some of the cost. The newest type are constructed of a rubberized plastic material that avoids the metal framework and clasps of the older type of partials.

As long as you seek help, missing teeth do not have to mean the end of your smile's beauty and function. The best way to determine the right option for you is to arrange a consultation to learn about all of the advantages and benefits of each type of dental replacement for your individual situation.