

Replacing missing teeth

Do I need to have anything to replace a missing tooth?

The main reasons for replacing a missing tooth are:

- Appearance (the gap looks unsightly when you smile)
- Function (you feel that you can't eat as well as you used to)
- Prevention of other problems (sometimes the teeth on either side of a space can lean into the gap and alter the way the upper and lower teeth bite together. This can then lead to food getting packed into the gap, resulting in both decay and gum disease).

It would probably be best to leave the gap as it is if you are

- not concerned about the appearance of the gap,
- you feel that you still have enough teeth to chew adequately
- and your dentist thinks it unlikely that the teeth around the space will move

How are missing teeth replaced?

This depends on the number of teeth missing and on where they are in the mouth. The condition of the other teeth also affects the decision. There are two main ways to replace the missing teeth. The first is with a removable false tooth or teeth – a partial denture, with the base either made in acrylic or metal. Metal dentures are lighter, more hygienic and stable. The second is with a fixed option (something that you don't take out for cleaning); this can be either a bridge or an implant.

Denture:

Advantages: A denture is usually used where there are a number of teeth to replace, or when the missing teeth are on both sides of the mouth. Less expensive than fixed options.

Disadvantages: Can make it harder to keep the other teeth clean. Denture may move when eating and cause food to collect underneath its fit surface. May reduce taste.

Adhesive bridge:

Advantages: Very conservative preparation (minimally invasive). Not as expensive as a conventional bridge or implant.

Disadvantages: Sometimes not strong enough if patient has a very 'heavy bite'. The metal 'backing' may shine through if the adjacent teeth are very translucent.

Conventional bridge:

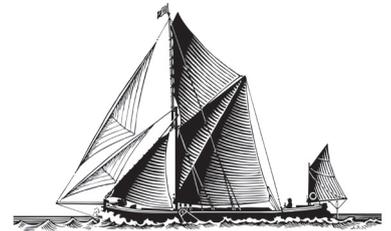
Advantages: Can be very strong and durable.

Disadvantages: Need to prepare a tooth on one side of the gap or teeth either side of the gap. This is quite invasive if these teeth are not already restored.

Implant:

Advantages: Implants have a good track record for success provided there is enough bone in the gap to take the implant. This is also a good option if there are unrestored teeth either side of the gap.

Disadvantages: May have to wait 3-6 months for the implant to 'integrate' with the bone before the new 'tooth' can be fixed. Can be quite costly, especially if there is a need for bone or soft tissue surgery first.



KELVIN
HOUSE
DENTAL PRACTICE

Quality Dental Care
for all the Family

