

BRIDGES

A missing tooth is not just a matter of your appearance. It's also a health concern, causing additional dental problems. When a tooth is missing, the remaining teeth can begin to move (drift) into the gap. This can cause gum disease and the loss of other teeth. It can also result in a change in your bite, and difficulty chewing or speaking.

These conditions can be relieved by the placement of a "bridge." To form this bridge, the teeth on each side of the space are covered with crowns, and an artificial tooth (a pontic) is attached between them to fill in the gap. The artificial tooth may be made from gold, alloys, porcelain, or combined materials.

This process takes a few visits to your dentist. First, the two side teeth must be prepared for the crowns by cleaning and filing them. An impression is taken of the area as a model for the dental laboratory to make your bridge. Your dentist will then

fit you with a temporary bridge (made of metal or plastic) to protect the area.

At your next visit, your dentist will remove the temporary bridge, thoroughly checking the area. At this time, you will receive your fixed bridge made of porcelain-fused-to-metal or ceramics. The dentist will carefully adjust it for proper fit. Depending on your circumstances, your dentist may temporarily cement the bridge in place, so that you can live with it awhile

before it becomes permanent. It may have to be further adjusted during a few more exams. When you and your dentist are both satisfied, the bridge is permanently cemented into place.

During this process, it is important that you follow your dentist's instructions for your home dental care, and that you tell your dentist about any discomfort or other sensations. With proper care, your bridge will last you comfortably for years.

