

Crowns

A dental crown may be needed to protect a weak tooth (for instance, from decay) from breaking or to hold together parts of a cracked tooth, to restore an already broken tooth or a tooth that has been severely worn down, to cover and support a tooth with a large filling when there isn't a lot of tooth structure left, to hold a dental bridge in place, to cover misshapened or severely discolored teeth, to cover a dental implant, or to make a cosmetic modification.

Before the process of making a crown begins, the dentist will numb the tooth and the gum tissue around the tooth. Next, the tooth receiving the crown is filed down along the chewing surface and sides to make room for the crown. The amount removed depends on the type of crown used (for instance, all-metal crowns are thinner and require less tooth structure removal than all-porcelain or porcelain-fused-to-metal ones). If, on the other hand, a large area of the tooth is missing (due to decay or damage), your dentist will use filling material to "build up" the tooth to support the crown.

After reshaping the tooth, we will use a paste or putty to make an impression of the tooth to receive the crown. Impressions of the teeth above and below the tooth to receive the dental crown will also be made to make sure that the crown will not affect your bite.

The impressions are sent to a dental lab where the crown will be manufactured. The crown is usually returned to your dentist's office in two to three weeks. If the crown is made of porcelain, your dentist will also select the shade that most closely matches the color of the neighboring teeth. During this first office visit your dentist will make a temporary crown to cover and protect the prepared tooth while the crown is being made. Temporary crowns usually are made of acrylic and are held in place using a temporary cement.

At the second visit, the dentist will remove the temporary crown and check the fit and color of the permanent crown. If everything is acceptable, a local anesthetic will be used to numb the tooth and the new crown is permanently cemented in place.

Caring for your temporary crown:

Because temporary dental crowns are just that -- a temporary fix until a permanent crown is ready -- we suggest to take a few precautions. These include:

- Avoid sticky, chewy foods (for example, chewing gum, caramel), which have the potential of grabbing and pulling off the crown.
- Minimize use of the side of your mouth with the temporary crown. Shift the bulk of your chewing to the other side of the mouth.
- Avoid chewing hard foods (such as raw vegetables), which could dislodge or break the crown.

- Slide flossing material out-rather than lifting out-when cleaning your teeth. Lifting the floss out, as you normally would, might pull off the temporary crown.

What Problems Could Develop With a Dental Crown?

Discomfort or sensitivity.

Your newly crowned tooth may be sensitive immediately after the procedure as the anesthesia begins to wear off. If the tooth that has been crowned still has a nerve in it, you may experience some heat and cold sensitivity. Your dentist may recommend that you brush teeth with toothpaste designed for sensitive teeth. Pain or sensitivity that occurs when you bite down usually means that the crown is too high on the tooth. If this is the case, call our office as this can easily be fixed.

Chipped crown.

Crowns made of all porcelain can sometimes chip. If the chip is small, a composite resin can be used to repair the chip with the crown remaining in your mouth. If the chipping is extensive, the crown may need to be replaced.

Loose crown.

Sometimes the cement washes out from under the crown. Not only does this allow the crown to become loose, it allows bacteria to leak in and cause decay to the tooth that remains. If a crown feels loose, please contact our office.

Crown falls off.

Sometimes crowns fall off. Usually this is due to an improper fit, a lack of cement, or a very small amount of tooth structure remaining that the crown can hold on to. If this happens, clean the crown and the front of the tooth. You can replace the crown temporarily using dental adhesive or temporary tooth cement that is sold in stores for this purpose. Contact our office immediately. We will give you specific instructions on how to care for the tooth and crown for the day or so until you can be seen for an evaluation. Your dentist may be able to re-cement the crown in place; if not, a new crown will need to be made.