

Dentures

Dentures are false teeth that have been custom-made to fit your mouth. They replace your natural teeth. A full or complete denture replaces all your natural teeth and a partial denture rests on an acrylic or metal framework that attaches or clips to some of your remaining natural teeth. This fact sheet is for people who wear dentures. It explains getting used to new dentures, and discusses wearing dentures overnight, cleaning of dentures and looking after your dentures.

Getting used to new dentures

New dentures take time to get used to, so don't worry if they feel strange at first. It will take a little time for you and your mouth to adjust. Your dentist will have taken great care to make your dentures fit, but they may require slight adjustment in the first week or two while the dentures seat themselves. Minor sore spots or tenderness usually heal in a day or so. If soreness persists, you should make an appointment with your dental professional. If you have left your dentures out due to soreness, wear them for at least 24 hours before your appointment to help the dentist pinpoint the problem area.

Here are some common changes you may notice when you are first fitted with new denture/s:

- **Appearance:** Most dentures made with today's technology look very natural and other people can't tell you are wearing them. However, you may feel your teeth are more prominent and your lips are fuller. After several days, your facial muscles will relax, your dentures will seat themselves and your face and mouth will have a more natural appearance.
- **Speech:** You may experience some speech difficulties during the first few days. Your new denture/s will feel different from your natural teeth or from your previous dentures. Dentures also affect your tongue's movements. Once your tongue gets used to the new dentures, speech will return to normal. Speaking or reading out loud and in front of a mirror will help you get used to your denture/s.
- **Sense of taste:** At first, food may taste a little different. This is just your mouth adjusting to the feel and texture of your new dentures. Food will soon start to taste normal again.
- **Nausea:** If you feel nauseous after inserting your denture/s, relax and breathe in and out through your nose. Usually this feeling will pass and you should continue to wear your denture/s. If it is an ongoing problem, contact your dental professional as an adjustment of the denture/s may be necessary.
- **Eating:** It is likely you will experience some difficulty eating when you first receive your denture/s. It is common for a lower denture to move a little due to the action of your tongue, cheeks and lips when chewing. With practice, you will learn to control the movement of the lower denture. For the first few weeks:

- cut your food into smaller pieces
- place only a small portion in your mouth at any one time
- try softer foods
- chew more slowly than usual
- chew small portions evenly on both sides of your mouth
- avoid foods with a chewy, sticky or crunchy texture that may dislodge your denture/s
- avoid foods that require you to bite with your front teeth, such as whole apples and crusty bread. You can attempt these foods when you have mastered your new denture/s.

Wearing your dentures overnight

Wearing dentures at night is a personal choice. If you feel more comfortable sleeping with your dentures in, then do so. However, if you experience frequent or long lasting tenderness of the gums, rest your mouth by leaving your dentures in water overnight. Wearing your dentures at night for a few weeks may help you get used to them more quickly. Partial dentures should not be worn at night.

Cleaning your dentures

Like natural teeth, dentures attract plaque, become stained and collect food particles that can cause bad breath or irritate your gums. Keeping your dentures clean is vital for good oral health.

Whenever possible, your dentures should be cleaned immediately after eating. If you are away from home, rinse the dentures under tap water. Clean your dentures at least twice a day. The best cleaning method is a combination of brushing and soaking.

- **Brushing:** Use a small soft nailbrush with natural bristles (not nylon) or a denture brush to brush your dentures. Abrasive material can damage dentures so use soap or non-concentrated dishwashing liquid. Do not use toothpaste.
- **Soaking:** Soaking does not replace brushing but helps to clean difficult-to-reach areas. Commercial soaking agents are available from supermarkets and pharmacies, or you can make an inexpensive alternative at home by mixing equal parts of white vinegar and water. After soaking, thoroughly brush and rinse dentures in water. Don't use hot water as it may adversely affect the denture material.

To protect your oral health, you also need to look after your gums, tongue, palate and any natural teeth. Brush gums, tongue, palate and natural teeth gently twice daily with a soft bristled brush. This stimulates circulation in the tissues and helps remove plaque.

Regular dental checks are also important to monitor the health of the soft tissues in your mouth and diagnose other conditions.

Looking after your dentures

- Dentures are fragile and may break if dropped. Handle dentures over a folded towel or sink filled with water.
- Dentures should be kept in water when not in the mouth to prevent the denture from drying out.
- Take care with delicate partial dentures to prevent breakages. Avoid undue heavy biting on individual front teeth.
- Make sure clasps fit accurately so they do not rub or wear teeth, and make sure clasped teeth are cleaned well to avoid decay.
- See your dentist or prosthetist if the denture breaks, chips, cracks or becomes loose.

Other Resources

For more information:

- contact your dental professional
- call 13 HEALTH (13 43 25 84) for confidential health advice 24 hours a day, seven days a week
- [Queensland Health oral health website](http://www.health.qld.gov.au/oralhealth) (<http://www.health.qld.gov.au/oralhealth>)

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