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## Bridges

A bridge is a one-piece, non-removable device that fills a space that one or more teeth previously occupied, consisting of crowns and artificial teeth. Aside from replacing teeth for obvious aesthetic reasons, a bridge may be necessary to prevent your teeth from shifting. Shifting can lead to bite problems or jaw problems and periodontal disease. Bridges also reinforce existing tooth structure where large fillings make up the majority of the tooth.

There are three types of bridges commonly used:

- A fixed bridge is the most popular. It consists of two crowns, capping existing healthy teeth and holding the bridge in place. Connecting the crowns, in the space where the missing tooth was, is a pontic, or artificial filler tooth.
- A Maryland bridge is often used to replace front teeth. It consists of a filler that is attached to metal bands that are bonded to the abutting teeth. The metal bands consist of a white-colored composite resin that matches existing tooth color.
- A cantilever bridge is commonly used when there are teeth on only one side of the bridge span. A typical cantilever bridge consists of two crowned teeth positioned next to each other on the same side of the missing tooth space. The artificial tooth is connected to the two crowned teeth, which extend into the missing tooth space or end.

A bridge feels more natural than a partial because it stays in your mouth. They are usually made with a metal base and a porcelain covering to match your other teeth. Patients can floss the gumline of the teeth around the bridge by using a device called a floss threader. When completed, the teeth do not look like they are connected to each other, but in fact they are.

Teeth that have lost bone support due to gum disease can get loose (dentists call this mobility.) By connecting teeth by a bridge, they lose mobility because the connected teeth support each other, much in the same manner as posts support a fence. Adjacent teeth can be crowned and connected without replacing teeth in order to stabilize them. Dentists call this splinting.

A bridge can replace many teeth, as long as there is enough strength in the existing teeth to support the crowns necessary to stabilize the bridge. Implants can be used to reinforce the bridge, or put in as free standing teeth.

All fees are due in full at the time of service unless other financial arrangements have been made. If you are paying out-of-pocket and need to make payments for larger procedures, the final payment is due at the time the procedure is completed. Please be prepared to pay at least half of your financial responsibility at the first visit, and the remainder upon completion.

