

WHY DO I NEED A CROWN?



What are crowns and why are they used?

A crown is a restoration that covers, or caps, a tooth to restore it to its normal shape and size. Its purpose is to strengthen or improve the appearance of a tooth. Crowns are placed for a variety of reasons. Crowns can:

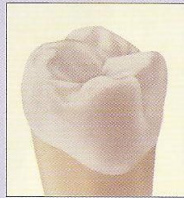
- restore teeth when there isn't enough tooth remaining to provide support for large fillings
- attach bridges
- protect weak teeth from fracturing
- restore fractured teeth
- cover badly shaped or discolored teeth
- cover dental implants

Which material is best?

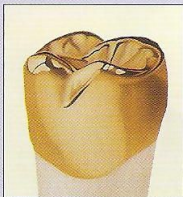
Both the "look" and function of a crown are considered when choosing the materials most suitable for you. Your dentist will consider the tooth location, the position of the gum tissue, the amount of tooth that shows when you smile, the color or shade of the tooth, and the function of the tooth.



Full porcelain fused to metal



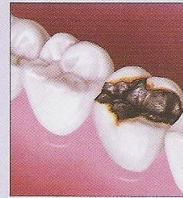
Full porcelain crown



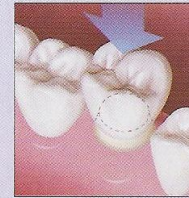
Full cast alloy crown

Crowns are made from a number of materials. Gold alloys or non-precious alloys, porcelain or ceramic, composite resin, or combinations of these materials may be used. Full metal crowns are stronger but not esthetically pleasing; porcelain crowns are not as strong as full metal crowns. Crowns made entirely of porcelain may look better, and they are stronger than they used to be, but still are not as strong as the other materials. In the process of making a crown, the material is colored to blend in with your natural teeth. It is important to consult with your dentist as to which crown materials are best for your specific situation.

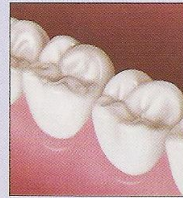
How is a crown placed?



Before



Crown placed over prepared tooth



Crown in place

The placement of a crown is a precision procedure. Several steps are involved, and at least two dental visits usually are necessary for completion. The dentist will prepare the tooth by removing its outer portion to accommodate the thickness of the crown. If the tooth has a filling, part of the material may be left in place to serve as a foundation for the crown. An impression is made to provide an exact model of the prepared tooth. Your dentist or a dental laboratory technician, following the written instruction of the dentist, will then make the crown from the model.

“Temporary” crowns are placed while the permanent crown is made. If the shapes or lengths of your teeth are changed for cosmetic purposes, temporary crowns will allow you to become accustomed to these changes. Temporary crowns also can help you decide if you like what you see or if there are any changes you would like made before the finished crowns are placed.

When the finished crown is ready, the dentist puts it in place and makes necessary adjustments. To see how your crown will look, you can use a large mirror held at arms’ length in various types of lighting. When you and your dentist are satisfied with its appearance, the crown will be cemented in place.

How do I take care of my crowns?

When you have crowns, it is especially important to brush twice a day and clean between your teeth daily with floss or other interdental cleaners. Brushing and flossing remove a sticky film of bacteria called plaque. Be sure to remove plaque from the area where the gum meets the tooth (the sulcus). When plaque accumulates in the sulcus, it can cause dental decay or gum disease. To prevent damaging or fracturing the crowns, avoid chewing hard foods, ice or other hard objects. It also is important to visit your dentist regularly.

What will the finished crown look like?

Your dentist’s main goal is to create crowns that look like natural teeth and feel comfortable. To achieve this, a number of factors are considered. These include the color, occlusion or “bite,” shape and length of both your natural teeth and your artificial crown. Any one of these factors alone can significantly affect your appearance.

Although your dentist may be able to accommodate your request for a particular esthetic effect, your first choice may not be possible due to technical limitations or oral health concerns. If you have a certain look in mind for your crown, discuss it with your dentist at your initial visit. When the procedure is complete, your teeth may not only be stronger, they may be the most attractive feature of your face – your crowning glory.

If you want your smile to be your crowning glory, you need healthy, attractive teeth. When they are cracked, stained or damaged, however, your teeth detract from your dental health and your appearance, too. To restore them, your dentist may recommend crowns. This brochure will help answer frequently asked questions about crowns.



American Dental Association
www.ada.org

211 East Chicago Avenue
Chicago, Illinois 60611-2678

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