

# What to do now you've lost a tooth

Everything you need to know about your options

The human body's 'masticatory system' (which helps you chew and begin digesting your food) is quite simply miraculous. From your teeth and their supporting bone and gums, to the powerful chewing muscles, and of course your jaw joint, these intimately interconnected parts each have a part to play. You can't alter any one aspect of this amazing machinery without affecting the rest.

It's easy to understand why losing a tooth can be a traumatic experience. And the sheer range of options once you're missing a tooth can be daunting. How do you decide on the best tooth replacement option for your individual situation?

In this eBook, Dr Andrew Teakle and the Wickham Terrace Dental team will help you explore your tooth replacement options, so that you can make the right decision for your needs, at the right time.



# There's more to the story than just a 'gappy smile'

## Your options when you have a missing tooth

Thanks to today's advanced dentistry, there are several options available to you when you're missing a tooth. The main ones are:

1. Do nothing, and live with an incomplete smile
2. Rely on a removable denture
3. Have a fixed dental bridge fitted
4. Completely replace your missing tooth with a dental implant

While the most obvious outcome of a missing tooth is its impact on your smile, every tooth in your mouth has its own job to do. That's why the loss of just one tooth will affect much more than just your appearance.

Your teeth's function, their durability, and your general oral health are all just as important as how your smile looks. And all of these factors will be affected when you're missing one or more teeth.

What's more, your oral health is intimately connected with your overall health too. So if a missing tooth causes dental decay, gum disease, or bone loss, the knock-on effect on your whole system can be significant.



Each of these options has its advantages and disadvantages. So how do you decide which one is the very best choice for you?

To help you understand your options, at Wickham Terrace Dental we've put together this comprehensive guide. We'll explain what happens if you decide not to replace your missing tooth, and investigate the top three tooth replacement options – as well as the pros and cons of each.

After reading this eBook, we hope you'll have the information you need to make a well-informed decision about your own oral health.

# 1 Choose not to replace a missing tooth



## The disadvantages of doing nothing

- Problems with chewing, speaking, and smiling
- An increased risk of tooth decay, gum disease, or tooth fractures
- A gradual loss of bone from your jaw
- Potential further tooth loss
- A loss of normal facial structure
- Decreased self-confidence, and an 'older' appearance
- Potential social stigmatisation and decreased job prospects

## The advantages of doing nothing

- No financial cost – at least in the short term!
- If the missing tooth is in the back of the mouth, it may not be easily visible
- No introduction of artificial materials into your mouth and system
- The area will be easy to clean around

## What to expect when living with a missing tooth

*So exactly what does happen when you lose a tooth? Perhaps more than you realise!*

In the same way as pumping iron helps to grow and maintain your body's muscles, each of the roots of your teeth places a stress on its own little area of jawbone. This pressure stimulates the production of new bone cells, which help to maintain your jawbone's strength, density, and shape.

Without a tooth and its root, this effect is lost. This means your jaw bone will deteriorate over time, leading to ageing facial features, and problems with chewing and speaking.

As well as maintaining your jaw bone, each of your teeth helps to support the surrounding muscles and tissue, and stabilise your adjacent teeth. Every tooth helps its neighbours to maintain their correct positioning and alignment.

When one tooth is missing, your remaining teeth will tend to shift towards the gap over time. You can imagine how many further problems this can cause – from increased wear on your teeth, to tooth decay, teeth alignment problems, and a 'gappy' smile.

## Replace a missing tooth and your oral health will benefit

You can see why the Wickham Terrace Dental team think it's a good idea to replace a missing tooth as soon as possible!

But while the decision to have missing teeth replaced may be a "no brainer", the question of the best possible replacement option is more difficult to answer.

Read on to find out more about the most common tooth replacement options, and how they may affect your personal situation and treatment goals.

# 2 Use a removable denture



## The disadvantages of a removable denture

- Won't protect you against bone loss and jaw bone shrinkage
- Your gum ridges (which support the denture) will shrink along with your jaw bone
- Will need re-fitting or replacement about every 3 to 5 years
- Denture clasps can damage the supporting natural teeth, causing decay
- Must be removed both for cleaning and overnight
- Require expensive, specialised cleaning solutions and tools

## The advantages of a removable denture

- An economical way to replace missing teeth
- Easier to clean than dental bridges
- A fairly quick solution to the aesthetic issues caused by tooth loss
- Can make eating easier, and speech clearer
- Will prevent your remaining teeth from moving out of position

# Removable partial dentures

Designed to close the gap created by missing teeth, partial dentures can be an affordable way to restore your smile.

Partial dentures consist of an acrylic base (sometimes with a metal framework) that is colour matched to your gums, onto which replacement teeth are attached. Most partial dentures are kept in place with metal clasps that firmly grasp your remaining natural teeth.

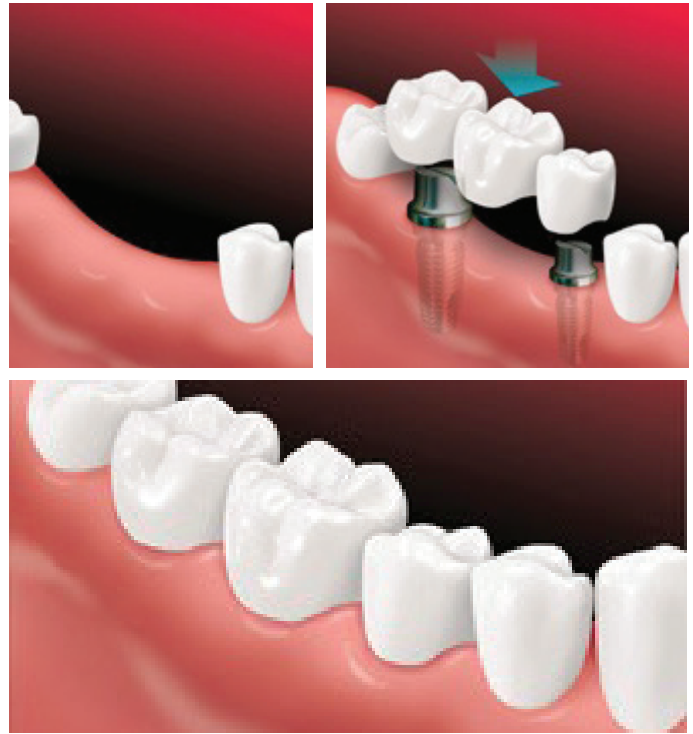
Across about 5 to 7 appointments, your dentist will take impressions of your mouth to fit the denture base; select your artificial teeth; test-fit the results; and then create the final partial denture.

Once the final denture is ready, your dentist will work with you to ensure the proper fit and comfort. We will make any adjustments that are needed, before you leave the practice with a complete new smile.

Your partial denture will often require further adjustments of the first few days and weeks, to maintain a comfortable and secure fit. We'll also invite you to visit our practice annually, so that we can check the fit of your dentures, the condition of your gums, and the health of your adjacent natural teeth.

Because they don't replace your missing tooth root, partial dentures won't prevent your jaw bone from shrinking or losing bone density over time. And as your jaw bone shrinks, your gum ridges that support the denture shrink along with it. This means that you'll probably need a replacement denture or re-fitting of your existing denture about every 3 to 5 years.

# 3 Have a fixed dental bridge



## The disadvantages of a fixed dental bridge

- Offer no protection against bone loss or jaw bone shrinkage
- Need regular replacement (about every 5 to 7 years) as your gum ridge changes
- Will need your neighbouring healthy teeth to be altered
- Can cause tooth decay in adjacent teeth
- Can damage adjacent teeth over time with wear, cracking or loosening
- Are difficult to keep clean, and need special tools to clean beneath them

## The advantages of a fixed dental bridge

- A reasonably fast way to replace missing teeth
- A fairly affordable tooth replacement option
- A very natural-looking dental restoration
- Can improve problems with biting, chewing, and speaking
- Can help prevent your other teeth from drifting out of position

## Fixed dental bridges

As the name suggests, this restoration literally 'bridges the gap' left by one to three missing teeth.

Dental bridges are usually supported by two dental crowns, one at each end of the bridge, which are securely anchored to your neighbouring teeth on either side of the gap. Between these crowns, the bridge holds artificial teeth which replace your missing natural teeth.

Modern dental bridges are usually made from porcelain or porcelain fused to metal, to give you a tooth restoration that closely resembles your natural teeth.

To prepare your teeth for a bridge, your dentist will shape and resize your adjacent natural teeth, ready for their crowns. The CEREC system then scans these prepared teeth and creates the crowns and bridge to precisely fit your mouth.

Your new dental bridge is then securely cemented to your prepared teeth, completing your bite and letting you speak, chew and smile normally.

When properly cared for with good at-home oral hygiene and regular visits to Wickham Terrace Dental, your new bridge will enhance your smile for years to come.

Just like a partial denture, a dental bridge doesn't replace your missing tooth root. This means your jaw bone will still be susceptible to bone loss and shrinkage over time. Your dental bridge will need to be replaced about every 5 to 7 years as your jaw bone and gum ridge change.



# 4 Replace your tooth with dental implants



## The disadvantages of dental implants

- Are a longer dental restoration process than bridges or dentures
- Require surgery for placement
- May first need bone augmentation or sinus lifts, if your jaw bone has shrunk
- May not be suitable for people with some health conditions or poor bone quality
- Initial costs can be higher than alternative tooth replacement options

## The advantages of dental implants

- Look and feel just like healthy natural teeth
- Function like natural teeth, helping you bite and chew normally
- Completely replace your missing tooth root
- Are self-supporting and don't need your adjacent teeth to be altered
- Protect against bone loss by stimulating bone growth and repair, like natural teeth
- Help to keep your jawbone strong and healthy
- Preserve the shape and structure of your face
- Are easy to maintain with daily brushing, flossing, and regular professional cleaning
- Are extremely durable, with an average lifespan of around 25 years
- Thanks to their longevity, are a cost-effective option over the long term

## Dental implants

One of the best all-round options for replacing missing teeth, dental implants restore not just the visible crown of a tooth, but the missing tooth root as well. This gives dental implants a distinct advantage over bridges and partial dentures, thanks to the way they preserve your jaw bone and gum ridge.

Made from ultra-strong titanium, a dental implant resembles a tiny screw that is placed into your jaw bone to form an artificial tooth root. This simple surgical procedure can be comfortably performed in our Wickham Terrace Dental practice.

Dr Teakle first makes a tiny incision in your gum tissue to expose the jaw bone. He then drills a small hole in the bone, gently inserts the dental implant, and sutures the incision closed. The newly placed implant is left securely covered by your gum tissue.

You'll then take a break from treatment for about 3 to 6 months, giving the implant plenty of time to securely bond with your jaw bone. Because titanium is very 'biocompatible', the resulting artificial tooth root will be extremely sturdy and able to handle the immense biting pressure of your jaw.

In the next stage, your secure implant is surgically uncovered and connected to a titanium abutment (or small metal post), to which the replacement crown can be attached. Once your gum tissue has healed around this abutment, it's time for the final stage.

Our team will custom-design and make a dental crown with our in-house CEREC technology. It's then a simple matter to attach the crown to the abutment, after which you can enjoy a complete, natural-looking, durable smile once more.

Dental implants don't just replace single missing teeth. If you've lost two or three teeth, we may use two implants to secure a permanent bridge – or even four implants to support a full arch of teeth.

# Introducing CEREC digital technology



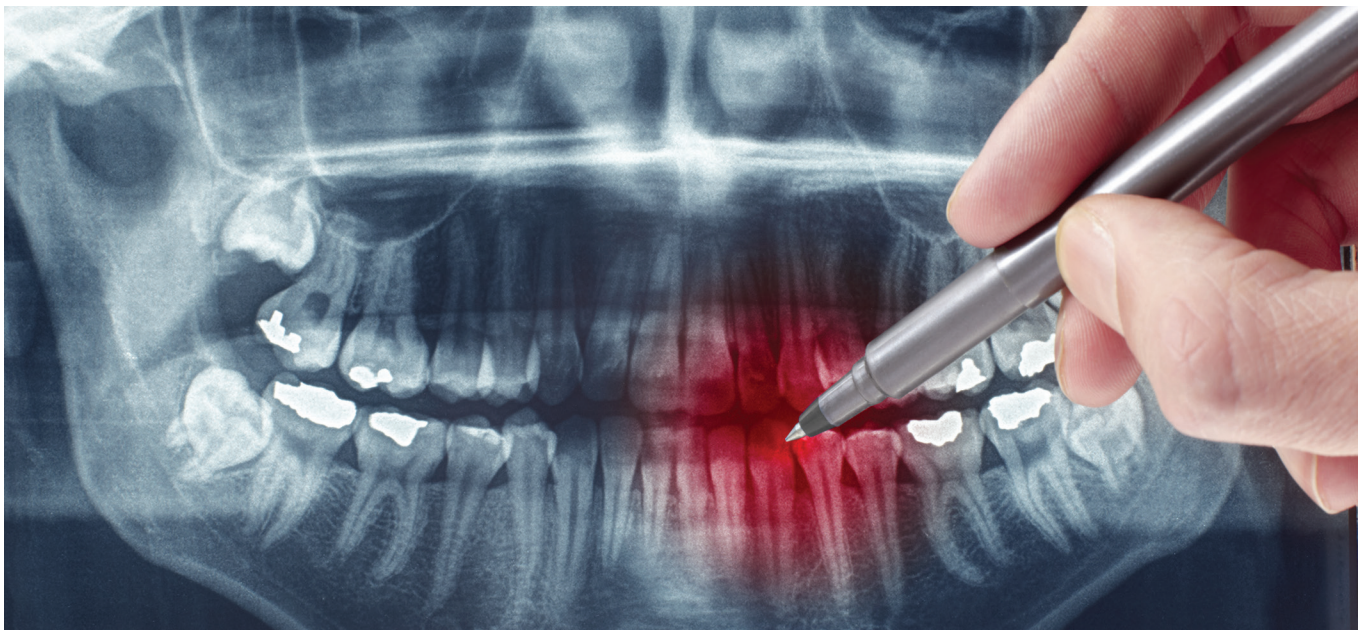
If you choose to replace your missing tooth with a bridge or implant, you can benefit from Wickham Terrace Dental's amazing "secret weapon" – our cutting-edge CEREC digital technology.

CEREC is a CAD/CAM system that scans your teeth, produces a detailed 3D image, then uses it to guide a computerised machine as it creates your custom tooth restoration – all in-house at our Brisbane CBD dental practice.

Thanks to CEREC, there's no more need for old-fashioned impression paste, or spending weeks waiting for your restoration to be made.

If you've chosen a dental bridge, you won't need to wear a temporary crown for up to two weeks while your bridge is created off-site. If you're having a dental implant, the CEREC system will precisely make its dental crown from a single ceramic block – in only about half an hour.

*With CEREC, replacing your missing tooth is now easier than ever.*



# How do you choose the best tooth replacement option?

If your head is spinning with all your tooth replacement options right now, that's understandable!

*As you've seen, there are pros and cons for every tooth restoration.*

It's no secret that at Wickham Terrace Dental, we're big fans of dental implants. Thanks to their strength, durability, and natural appearance, we firmly believe they're the best option for replacing one or more missing teeth.

Dr Andrew Teakle has personally placed hundreds of dental implants, with an extremely high success rate. Thanks to our in-house CEREC laboratory, we can offer you the very highest standard of dental implants, faster than you imagined possible, and at an affordable price.

Of course, everyone's teeth and mouth are different. If dental implants aren't right for you, we can provide you with high quality CEREC dental bridges or a partial denture, fabricated from superior materials, as an attractive and functional alternative.



**Talk to us to discover your ideal teeth replacement option**

To decide which option is best for you, we invite you to come in and meet the friendly, expert team at Wickham Terrace Dental.

We won't pressure you into one option or another. We'll take the time to talk with you, understand your personal circumstances and goals, and only then recommend the right tooth replacement option for your needs.

**Find out more about replacing your missing tooth today.**

Call us on 3831 3031 or email [contact@wickhamterrace dental.com.au](mailto:contact@wickhamterrace dental.com.au)