

# Conventional dental bridges



## What is a conventional dental bridge?

A bridge is a fixed replacement for a missing tooth, or teeth. A dental bridge is fixed in place and cannot be removed (unlike a denture). Conventional dental bridges are retained in the mouth by using natural teeth next to the space where a tooth is missing. The natural tooth is cut down to create space for a conventional dental bridge to be placed. They are commonly made of metal, metal and ceramic and sometimes all-ceramic.



Porcelain and metal bridge replacing an upper incisor



Teeth prepared for a ceramic bridge

## Why do I need a conventional dental bridge?

Dental bridges can only replace a small number of teeth. Conventional dental bridges can only be used in certain situations whereby the surrounding teeth are strong enough to support a bridge tooth. Conventional dental bridges are not used for teeth that have active disease (for example decay and gum disease). Equally, conventional bridges are not used for teeth that have never had a filling or previous restoration (for example a previous crown or bridge).



Ceramic bridge cemented in place

## What happens during treatment?

Typically, a conventional dental bridge will take between 2-3 visits to complete. X-rays will be required at the beginning of treatment to check the health of the teeth which will support the bridge.

### Appointment 1

- The tooth and surrounding areas are anaesthetised to make the procedure more comfortable.
- The teeth adjacent to the space are shaped to be able to support the bridge.
- An impression will be taken of the newly shaped teeth, using a putty-like substance.
- The colour of the replacement tooth/teeth is decided upon.
- A temporary bridge is placed to protect the prepared tooth/teeth until the next appointment.

### Appointment 2

- The temporary bridge is removed.
- The bridge is tried on the tooth to check the fit and appearance.
- The bridge is cemented into position.
- Any necessary adjustments to the bite are made.



Dental model showing teeth prepared for a conventional bridge



Porcelain and metal bridge made on the dental model



Porcelain and metal bridge made on the dental model

## What are the advantages of conventional dental bridges?

- **Survival:** If looked after well, a conventional dental bridge can last over 10 years.
- **Reinforce heavily restored teeth:**  
If the adjacent tooth supporting the bridge has a large filling in it, the bridge can reinforce the strength of this tooth
- **Aesthetics and function:** Dental bridges restore your smile and allow for normal talking and chewing.
- **Tooth movement:** Conventional bridges can prevent other teeth from moving into the gap.

## What are the risks of conventional dental bridges?

- **Irreversible tooth preparation:**  
Conventional dental bridges require the supporting teeth to be cut making the procedure irreversible.
- If the tooth supporting the bridge has a healthy nerve, there is a risk (roughly 20% chance) that the nerve in the tooth may become inflamed and over time die. If this occurs, a root canal treatment or tooth extraction is required.
- As people age, gums can recede (shrink back). Over time, the margins of the bridge may become visible.

- If porcelain is used on your bridge, there is a risk this may fracture in the future. If so, the bridge will need to be replaced.

## What are the alternatives to a conventional dental bridge?

We will always discuss the options available to you in depth before any decisions are made. Such options may include:

- No treatment (and accepting the gap)
- Resin bonded bridge - these bridges use strong glue to stick a false tooth to the neighbouring without the need to cut down teeth. These are only suitable in certain cases.
- Denture - dentures are removable. Dentures are good for replacing multiple missing teeth.
- Implants - implants are used to replace the missing roots of teeth. Porcelain teeth are attached on top of the implant 'root'. These are not provided by undergraduate students at Bristol Dental School.

## What happens after treatment is finished?

The tooth may feel sensitive after treatment, but this should subside. The new material will feel unusual in the mouth but patients quickly get used to a new dental bridge.

Please make an appointment for a check-up, or if the bridge feels uncomfortable or painful.

To check that you and your dental professional are happy with the outcome of your treatment, you will be reviewed after your treatment is finished.

When all of your dental treatment is complete, you will be discharged from the dental school. We advise that you find a dentist outside the dental school to continue to look after your teeth and restorations.

## Types of questions you may want to ask...

- Which kind of dental bridge is most appropriate for me?
- How can I clean my dental bridge?
- When should I make an appointment if pain or discomfort persists?

## And finally...

Maintaining good oral hygiene is crucial for healthy teeth and gums, and will help reduce the risk of decay and gum disease. Brush your teeth twice daily for 2 minutes with fluoride toothpaste and clean between your teeth with floss or interdental brushes.

Smoking and alcohol increase the risk of oral disease. If you want to quit smoking or reduce your alcohol intake, please talk to the clinician you see for further advice.

It is important to attend dental check-ups regularly, as this will help your dentist to identify any dental disease early.

Please ask at reception  
if you require this  
information in a different  
language or format.

**Contact us:**

Monday to Friday,  
8:30 am - 4:30pm  
T: 0117 374 6647

Emergency out of hours  
NHS 111