



Complete & Partial Dentures

"Break in" period

Following the delivery of new dentures there is a variable period (generally 2-6 weeks) during which patients must adjust and accommodate. New dentures often feel bulky and awkward at first. Soft tissues of the mouth, now covered, may have been open or left uncovered by a previous denture. This strangeness, although bothersome, is a temporary problem that is usually resolved during the adjustment period.

Patients often state that their relatives or friends had "no problems getting used to their dentures" and that they could chew well from the first day. Unfortunately, patients soon forget the difficult adjustment period once their dentures have become second nature. The ability to function with dentures involves learned neuro-muscular skills that take time to develop. Although the time may vary and depend on a number of factors, all new denture wearers will require this adjustment period.

Speech

Because the new artificial teeth may be placed in slightly different relationships and the plastic denture base may feel bulky, speech patterns are often temporarily interrupted. The muscles of the tongue, lips and cheek must learn to coordinate movement to allow normal speech. The learning process can be enhanced by practice. Reading aloud is one way to minimize the time required to recover normal speech patterns. Continued difficulty should be brought to our attention.

Saliva

A normal response of the body to new dentures is increased salivary flow. The glands try to wash out the strange "foreign body". This situation may persist for several weeks but will gradually disappear.

Sore Spots

New dentures almost always cause some sore spots. These will be relieved during the first few follow-up appointments. When you do experience sore spots try to wear your denture as much as possible prior to your follow up visit so that we can see the spot. We recommend soft foods during the first few days. The best home treatment between appointments for sore spots is to rinse with warm salt water.

Wearing Dentures at Night

There is no question that the healthiest policy is to remove the dentures for at least six hours daily to allow the soft tissues to breathe and recover. For most patients the most convenient way to accomplish this is to remove the dentures during sleep. While out of the mouth the dentures should be soaked in water or a denture cleaning solution. Such a practice will maintain much healthier oral tissues, preserve the ridges and the underlying bone, and allow the dentures to fit properly for a longer period of time.



Eating

Again, it will take practice to learn to eat a fairly normal diet with the introduction of new dentures. During the first several days we recommend a soft diet to allow us to eliminate potential sore spots with a minimum of discomfort and to make the learning period more tolerable. Avoid tough, hard and sticky foods until you become more experienced.

Although some experienced complete denture wearers can eat a normal diet including apples, salads and corn on the cob, this is probably the exception rather than the rule. Most full denture patients will find some restrictions in the foods they can manage.

Some points to remember regarding eating and chewing habits:

- ✓ Eat slowly and cut food into small pieces.
- ✓ Although the normal tendency is to chew on one side or the other, denture wearers may function better by chewing with food on both sides over the back teeth at the same time. (This helps to balance the forces on the denture).
- ✓ Avoid, when possible, bringing the lower front teeth forward and against the upper front teeth to cut or incise foods. (This protects the delicate upper front ridge and prevents tipping of the denture).
- ✓ If it is necessary to bite using the front teeth, try spreading the tongue against the back of the upper denture to keep it in place.
- ✓ Try to chew vertically (up & down) rather than horizontally (side to side).

Cleaning

The best way to keep your dentures clean is to brush them daily. There are specific types of toothpaste made for denture material. Do not use an abrasive toothpaste as it may scratch the acrylic. Also use a separate toothbrush for your dentures. Take a good three minutes each day to thoroughly clean the inside and the outside of the dentures. It is very important to remove all the plaque and food debris from your dentures every day. Treat your dentures as you would your own natural teeth.

Caring for the oral tissues is also very important. A soft toothbrush should be used to scrub the tongue, gums and roof of the mouth.

Recall Appointments

Periodic recalls are advised to evaluate the dentures, examine the occlusion (how the teeth fit together) and check the remaining soft tissues. Generally, these should be every six months.

Longevity

No dentures are meant to last forever. We feel that 5-7 years is the average life span of a well-made appliance. As time passes, the tissues and bone that support the denture will resorb (shrink). Generally, the denture will require a relines every couple of years to maintain an ideal fit.