

Removable Partial Dentures

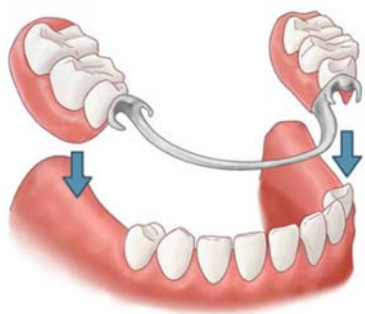
Dentures are removable false teeth made of acrylic (plastic) or metal. They fit snugly over the gums to replace missing teeth and eliminate potential problems caused by gaps.

Gaps left by missing teeth can cause problems with eating and speech, and teeth either side of the gap may grow into the space at an angle.

What are Removable Partial Dentures?

A partial denture is designed to fill in the gaps left by one or more missing teeth. It is either a plastic or metal plate with a number of false teeth attached to it. It usually clips onto some of your natural teeth via metal clasps, which hold it securely in place in your mouth. It can easily be unclipped and removed.

Crowns on your natural teeth are sometimes needed to improve the fit of a removable partial denture and they are usually required when the clasps need to surround heavily restored teeth.



What are the Advantages and Disadvantages of Removable Partial Dentures?

Removable partial dentures are the most cost effective treatment to replace multiple missing teeth in a single arch. They are non-invasive (requiring little or no removal of tooth structure, unlike fixed bridges) and can effectively replace multiple gaps with a single appliance. Replacement of single gaps are typically not recommended as the partial denture may be too small and can be accidentally inhaled or swallowed.

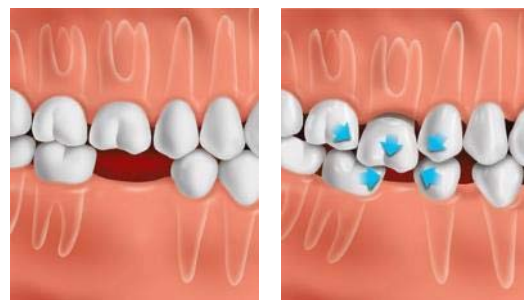
Being a removable appliance however lends them to several disadvantages. Unlike implants or bridges which are fixed, removable partial dentures can move around slightly during function and must be taken out while sleeping. Secondly, they tend to be a bulkier appliance incorporating either metal or plastic connectors which cover the palate or underneath the tongue. Some patients do not tolerate this movement, coverage of the palate or pressure on the gums.

Due to their complex design, they also have a tendency to collect food and plaque compared to fixed appliances. For this reason, meticulous oral hygiene and a good diet are required to prevent decay occurring around the neighbouring teeth. Wearing a partial can also put extra stress on neighbouring natural teeth. In the long term, both decay and these stresses can increase the risk of losing more teeth over time.

What are the Alternatives to Removable Partial Dentures?

There are 3 other alternatives to removable partial dentures:

1. Accepting the presence of a gap – this is however not without consequence as missing teeth can allow neighbouring teeth to drift causing food impaction, decay and bite issues.
2. Fixed bridges – bridges are crowns on neighbouring teeth which are joined to replace the gap. They are cemented so that they are not removable. They are more expensive than removable partial dentures and are more invasive as the neighbouring teeth need to be shaped to fix the bridge. They are the treatment of choice for missing teeth prior to dental implants.
3. Implants – dental implants are the closest replacement to having natural teeth. Surgery is required to place the implant, but once they are restored they feel and function as real teeth. Unfortunately, they are more expensive than the alternative options and require minor surgery.



If the tooth is not replaced, other teeth can drift out of position and change the bite. Shifting teeth can possibly lead to tooth decay and gum disease



Fixed Bridge



Dental Implant

Types of Removable Partial Dentures

At Burpengary Dental, we are able to provide three main types of removable partial dentures, each with their own advantages and disadvantages:

Metal Partial Dentures

Conventional metal partial dentures consists of metal clasps that are C-shaped, I-shaped and Y-shaped parts of the denture framework. They fit around neighbouring natural teeth which may require shaping or crowning to help hold the clasps and keep the denture securely in place.

Being made of metal, they are more robust than acrylic and flexible dentures and can be made thinner and smaller. On the downside, the metal clasps may be visible when smiling. They are also more difficult to modify if further teeth are lost in future or if changes to the supporting teeth occur.



Acrylic (Plastic) Partial Dentures

Acrylic partial dentures, unlike conventional metal partial dentures, are constructed from plastic with metal wire clasps. They function similar to metal partial dentures and are of a lower cost.

Being made from plastic however comes with several disadvantages. They are typically of lower durability and are far bulkier than their metal counterparts due to the lower strength of acrylic; for some patients, this may be an issue. Modification and repair of these types of dentures is easier than metal dentures, but is not guaranteed.



Flexible Partial Dentures (Valplast or Duraflex)

Valplast or Duraflex dentures are made from a flexible, biocompatible, thermoplastic nylon with unique physical and aesthetic properties. They are metal free dentures with clasps made from pink or translucent flexible plastic. The translucency of the material allows the natural tissue colour to appear through the material. It has the advantage of not showing any metal at all and as a natural look.

While flexible dentures are the most naturally looking type of removable partial denture, being made out of plastic, they bulkier than metal dentures and are of a comparable bulkiness to acrylic dentures. Due to the specialised plastic, flexible dentures are the most difficult type of denture to be modified or repaired and there are cases where repair is almost impossible if a breakage occurs. They are of a similar cost to conventional metal partial dentures.



What to Expect

- In the beginning, your new partial denture may feel awkward or bulky. Some movement of the denture during function can be expected. This is normal, and you will eventually become accustomed to wearing it. For first time wearers, this can be a steep learning curve.
- Inserting and removing the partial denture will require some practice.
- Your denture should fit into place with relative ease. Never force the partial denture into position by biting down. This could bend or break the clasps.
- Removable partial dentures must be left out at night to prevent fungal infections of the mouth. They should be left in water to prevent shrinkage while out of the mouth.
- Initially, you may be asked to wear your partial denture all the time. Although this may be uncomfortable at first, it's the quickest way to identify areas that may need adjustment.
- Like a pair of new shoes, if the denture puts too much pressure on a particular area, that spot will become sore. Sore spots from new dentures aren't unusual and an adjustment appointment is usually required one week after the partial denture is fitted.
- Eating should become a more pleasant experience with dentures. Start out by eating soft foods that are cut into small pieces. Chew on both sides of the mouth to keep even pressure on both sides. Avoid foods that are extremely sticky or hard. You may want to avoid chewing gum during the adjustment period.
- Partial denture can also help improve your speech but may initially result in a lisp. If you find it difficult to pronounce certain words, practice reading out loud. Repeat the words that give you trouble. With time, you will become accustomed to speaking properly with your partial denture.
- Changes to diet and careful cleaning are required to prevent further decay and tooth loss. Partial dentures do increase the rate of decay if both these factors are not kept in check.