

What Are My Best Options if I Need to Replace Three Teeth?

People have missing teeth for various reasons. Some cases are genetic and people are simply lacking teeth in areas of their mouth. The adult teeth never grew, after losing baby teeth. Others have lost teeth over gum disease, accidents, cavities, and other conditions. If you're in this situation, it's no secret that the missing teeth cause problems. You can physically see the effects of shifting teeth, feel the difficulty of chewing food without teeth, speaking, etc. This will clarify some of the ways to correct this/these problems.

Why Replace?

Missing teeth cause multiple issues inside a person's mouth and ultimately, affect her mouth. Among these: the teeth around the missing tooth will begin to gravitate toward the empty space. This causes other teeth to shift, since teeth are designed to hold each other in place. Also, this can affect your bite, which can cause headaches, make chewing food more difficult, cause your face to age faster, and make it harder for you to reach places in your mouth for brushing and flossing. We all know these issues can advance periodontal disease and other gum issues. Plus, missing teeth affect your smile. Who feels like smiling, when there are gaping holes? This can cause embarrassment. Replace those missing teeth!

Because you want the replacement teeth to last as long as possible both for monetary reasons, as well as your oral health, it is wise to investigate the following treatments: partial dentures, porcelain bridges, or implants.

Partial Dentures

A partial denture fits in and out of your mouth by clasping onto the teeth closest to the missing teeth. Usually, your doctor will advise that you place a crown next to where the partial denture fits. The reason behind this is that a partial denture clasps much better to a crown than your natural tooth.

Partials have come a long way. The lab will create a gum-colored framework that is acrylic-based to match your natural gum as closely as possible. In addition to that, the teeth in the partial will be shaded to match your natural teeth.

Before sending you away, the dentist will also try to fit the denture and make the necessary adjustments so that you are as comfortable as possible. Be advised that you will likely need to come in from time to time for adjustments, as your teeth shift naturally.

One of the great things about a removable partial denture is that individuals can easily remove the denture to clean it on a regular basis. This keeps the denture in really good shape. Another perk is the cost. Partial dentures typically cost less than bridges or implants.

A downfall to the removable denture is that if you fail to wear it for a period of time, your mouth will shift, and as a result, the denture will not fit as nicely or easily. This has been known to cause pain in a person's mouth. The other con of such a treatment is that it's a bit humbling for people to wear dentures and many people get embarrassed.

If you are going to get a removable partial denture, be sure to keep it in the same place each night. You do not want to lose it or accidentally throw it away. This should be easy, because the partial needs to soak in a special solution each night in order to clean it.

Last, know that your mouth will change over time. This is what happens to the body. Eventually, you will need to have the dentist make you another denture to compensate for the physical changes in your mouth. Whatever you do, do not try to adjust the denture yourself. This could cause it to break or you could permanently damage it, resulting in the need for a new one.

Fixed Bridges

This is another option for you to consider if you have one or more missing teeth. A device is made that fits directly over the missing space, and keeps other teeth from moving.

Bridges are created by preparing the two teeth around the space of the missing tooth or teeth. Essentially, the doctor will drill down the teeth on either side of the empty space, as if she was going to crown the teeth.

Then, the lab will create a structure made up of three or more crowns. The structure will have a crown for the tooth drilled down, a crown for each missing tooth, and then, a final crown for the other prepared tooth.

Upon return from the lab, the doctor will make any necessary adjustments to properly fit the bridge in your mouth. This can take some work, because the bridge must fit over the prepared teeth, as well as on the gums of the missing teeth. Once the bridge feels right and fits well, the doctor will permanently cement the bridge down. All of this process requires several visits.

The benefit of a fixed bridge is that the empty space(s) is now filled, which will prevent your other teeth from moving and shifting. The fixed bridge will also help your jawbone to have more stability and refrain from shrinking. Bridges are less likely to break (as long as the owner does not chew anything too hard like ice, chips, hard caramels, or nuts), because they are stationary and cannot come out of the mouth. This is definitely a benefit over the denture. There is less pain associated with a bridge. Most individuals eventually forget that it's not their natural teeth. Last, bridges look natural. They are matched well to your teeth and unlike a denture

there is less to match. The chances of the shade matching are greater than having to match your gum and your teeth.

On the flipside, bridges can break. When compared to an implant, they prove less stable and are likely to need replacement at some point in time. The cost is greater than that of a partial denture, and you will always lose part of the teeth next to the gap. Basically, you choose to crown perfectly normal, healthy teeth when you get a bridge. Cleaning is a bit harder with a bridge.

Bridges have proven to be great fits for many patients. If you do not have the kind of money an implant costs, these structures are going to be better than a denture. Furthermore, you can keep a beautiful smile with a natural-looking bridge. It will take some effort on the dentist's and lab's part, but it can be accomplished.

Be mindful of how you treat the bridge in your mouth. Protect it by choosing not to eat hard foods and candies. Cleaning and consistent oral hygiene are imperative. You must floss very carefully around the bridge, as well as brush, and possibly utilize a water pick or something of the like to keep the bridge in great condition. Remember, there is no tooth under the most center part of the bridge. This can cause problems in gum disease. Clean it well.

Implants

Implants are definitely a great option; however, you cannot simply choose to have implants. Your doctors (family, dentist, and oral surgeon) must determine if you are a good candidate. This means that they need to check your overall health. Do you have a good immune system? Are you diabetic? Do you have cancer or have you had cancer? Is your jawbone strong enough to support something like implants?

Each of these questions must be answered thoroughly. Once it is determined that you qualify for something, you need your doctors to work together. While some offices offer same-day implants, most places are going to tell you that it takes several months to accomplish an implant.

Many people start at the dentist, and then, go to the oral surgeon for a bone graft. The bone graft thickens the jawbone, to make it stronger for the implant. Remember that this takes time to heal. Your dentist will likely not see you until your jaw is healed from the bone graft.

Once your oral surgeon clears you to start the rest of the process, you will go back to your dentist and she will place the implants. She will place tiny screws called abutments into your jawbone. A healing time is also associated with this process. The goal is for your jawbone to accept the implant and begin growing around the implant.

After a period of time, your dentist will have you back to the office and confirm you are ready for the crowning moment. She will create a crown to fit neatly over your implant. If you have multiple teeth missing, the doctor may choose to do two implants, leaving a space in the middle, and create a bridge for you to wear over the implants.

Implants may take many months to complete, but once complete, they are long lasting. They should remain in your mouth until you die. They are made with a light metal like titanium and they are firm. Once your jawbone has accepted them and grown around them, they are part of your mouth. There is no needed adjusting or anything like a set of partial dentures. That is a huge benefit! It saves time and pain.

Also, they do not affect any of the teeth around them. Unlike bridges that require crowning on either side of the missing tooth and partial dentures needing crowned teeth next to them for better clasping, implants only impact the teeth they replace.

Implants look natural. They do not move, and thus, have a more natural feel than bridges and partial dentures.

Because of their firmness and the fact that they are placed directly in the jawbone, the jawbone does not shrink. Also, the other teeth are held in place by the implant, so no shifting of other teeth occurs, and with the help of flossing and brushing, you keep healthy gums.

Now, implants are quite expensive. Of course, you can reach out for financing and payment arrangements, but compared to bridges and partial dentures, implants prove quite a bit more in price.

The other hiccups with implants include the need for surgery and the shifting between many doctors and appointments. Thus, they are not always a good fit for everyone.

If you end up choosing implants, be sure to stay on top of the maintenance. Brush regularly and thoroughly. Floss between teeth, so that plaque cannot get down into the gums and around your teeth. Do everything you can to protect your investment.

Educate Yourself

As a patient, it is your responsibility to weigh out all of your options. Do not feel like you only have one consideration. There are many choices and every person is different. Some people love their partial denture and feel pleased with that choice. Others insist a bridge improved their smile greatly, with no associated problems. Still, others claim implants are the way to go.

Consult with your doctor and your budget. Weigh out the pro's and con's to each choice, and feel confident in your decision. The future looks bright!