

FAQ's About Crowns

What is a Crown?

A crown is a dental restoration that covers up or caps a tooth. It is cemented into place and cannot be taken out.

What materials are in a Crown?

Crowns are made of three types of materials:

- 1. Porcelain - most like a natural tooth in color*
- 2. Gold Alloy - strongest and most conservative in its preparation*
- 3. Porcelain fused to an inner core of gold alloy (Porcelain Fused to Metal or "PFM") - combines strength and aesthetics*

What are the benefits of having a Crown?

Crowns restore a tooth to its natural size, shape and - if using porcelain - color. They improve the strength, function and appearance of a broken down tooth that may otherwise be lost. They may also be designed to decrease the risk of root decay.

What are the risks of having a Crown?

In having a crown, some inherent risks exist both to the tooth and to the crown itself.

The risks to the tooth are:

- Preparation for a crown weakens tooth structure and permanently alters the tooth underneath the crown*
- Preparing for and placing a crown can irritate the tooth and cause "post-operative" sensitivity which may last for up to 3 months*
- The tooth underneath the crown may need root canal treatment about 6% of the time during the lifetime of the tooth*
- If the cement seal at the edge of the crown is lost, decay may form at the juncture of the crown and tooth*

The risks to the crown are:

- Porcelain may chip and metal may wear over time*
- If the tooth needs a root canal after the crown is permanently cemented, the procedure may fracture the crown and the crown may need to be replaced*

What are the alternatives to Crowns?

Alternatives to crowns are fillings such as composite or silver amalgam. These restorations remove decay and may restore teeth to their original form but are limited because they:

- Do not improve the strength of broken down teeth*

- *Do not decrease the risk of root decay*
- *Do not improve the long term function and aesthetics of broken down teeth as well as crowns*

How can an existing bite affect a Crown?

- *Excessive bite forces may lead to the tooth under the crown breaking or loosening*
- *Excessive bite forces may lead to the crown chipping, breaking or loosening*

Are there any post treatment limitations once I have a Crown?

- *Porcelain on a crown may have a good color match with adjacent natural teeth when the crown is placed but less of a match as your natural teeth age*
- *Gum recession may lead to unsightly dark roots or crown margins becoming visible*
- *A crown may chip or break if used for abnormal activities (e.g. biting fishing line, sewing thread or finger nails, opening bottles)*