

So You Need a Crown??

In dentistry, the caps placed over your teeth are referred to as crowns. While most crowns are placed in the mouth to restore a tooth to its original and proper function, shape, and size, some crowns are placed cosmetically. Your dentist will be able to tell you in a routine exam.

Dentists recommend crowns for patients with:

- Deep fillings that reside close to the root of the tooth
- Deep fillings that are starting to decay
- Deep fillings that begin to feel painful
- Cracked or severely worn-down teeth
- Cavities that appear too large to fill
- Root canals (The new crown acts as a protector to the newly restored tooth)
- Discolored or deformed/misshaped teeth

Each of these reasons would be valid to replace a tooth with a new cap or crown. Most insurance plans cover a portion of the crown, as long as the reason seems valid. However, if the procedure is purely cosmetic, you may have to foot the bill entirely. Be sure to speak with your insurance provider so that you know what to expect on the payment.

The Placement

Crowns are typically placed after two visits to the dentist. These are the necessary steps:

Crown Prep: The dentist will numb your mouth and then, remove the outer part of the tooth. She will be sure to rid your tooth of any decay, as well as make the tooth a proper size, so that the cap can fit perfectly over the tooth. In some cases, there is not a strong enough structure underneath the tooth, after she has drilled it down. In these instances, you may be required to get a core build-up.

Impression Time: The dentist or dental assistant will need to make an exact model of your tooth. She will mix up a fast-setting putty of sorts and press it down into your mouth. Some offices utilize a digital scanner to speed up this process. Either way, you need a replica, so that your crown looks as natural as possible. Additionally, the doctor will take a shade, so that the new crown matches the teeth in your mouth.

Temporary Crown: Typically, the lab takes about two weeks to finish making your crown. During that two weeks, the tooth is still live. You have nerves that will feel sensitive, if not properly covered. Consequently, your dentist will make a temporary crown for you to wear until your new crown comes back. Now, this temporary is not permanently cemented into your mouth. As a result, you

absolutely must act with caution. No gum chewing allowed or sticky foods or substances, and flossing must be done very carefully to ensure your temporary holds in place.

Seating the Crown: Before permanently cementing the crown in place, the dentist will fit it in your mouth. She will make necessary adjustments to the crown by trying it on and off. When she and you finally feel like it fits well, she will permanently cement it in your mouth.

The Making

Constructing a crown happens in a lab and is considered a form of art by many. Crowns are typically made from various metals, ceramics, and porcelain, as well as a composite resin. The goal is to achieve a tooth structure that appears so natural that when looking in your mouth, no one would know it was a prosthetic tooth. You want the crown to look as natural as possible.

Before deciding how to make your crown and what to use to make it, many questions must be answered and taken into consideration. First, where is the new crown located in your mouth? What is the function of said tooth? How is the setting of the tooth in relation to your gum tissue? When you smile, how much of that tooth will show? What is the color and shade of your other teeth? Do you have a preference?

Crowns in the front of your mouth obviously need to be almost perfect, because they are so visible. Any shades off will show dramatically in your smile, whereas crowns in the back of your mouth can get away with being slightly off in color.

Aftercare

If not properly cared for, your crown can break down just like a regular tooth. Be mindful of the things you place in your mouth. Refrain from chewing on hard, sticky substances and foods (ice, candies, gums, certain kinds of nuts, pencils, etc.). Floss really well around your crown to avoid pockets developing. Brush twice a day and keep up your oral hygiene habits. You want to protect your investment.