

Filling in a Space - Dentures vs Bridges vs Implants!

If a tooth is missing or needs to be extracted, there are 3 main options for replacing the tooth – a denture, a bridge or an implant.

A denture replaces a tooth with a plastic one attached to a metal or plastic framework that wraps around the remaining teeth and surrounding soft tissues and usually has clips or clasps attached to other teeth to help hold it in place. It is a lower cost means of replacing a missing tooth, but needs the most getting used to because it covers a lot of the mouth that would not otherwise be covered. A denture has the greatest impact on comfort, speech and eating until the patient adapts to it. It is not fixed in place and needs to be removed for cleaning and to give the tissues that it covers time to rest and recover. It can be used as a permanent long term option, but is commonly used as an interim option until a bridge or an implant is made.



Denture with Plastic Framework



Denture with Metal Framework

A bridge uses the adjacent teeth next to a missing tooth to replace it. Just like a bridge crossing a river from where it gets its name has vertical supports either side of the river, a dental bridge requires a tooth on either side of the missing tooth to support its replacement. Basically, a crown is placed on each tooth either side of the missing one and a third crown called a pontic is joined to these other 2 crowns to form 1 strong unit. The pontic rests on the gum tissue where the tooth is missing, making it look like a tooth is coming out of the gum like a normal tooth. A bridge is cemented in place, is very strong and durable long term and cannot be removed. It is a good option if the teeth adjacent to the missing one have large fillings which would benefit from crowns. Because all 3 teeth are now joined together, there needs to be an adjustment in flossing technique to clean under the pontic. Also if something happens to 1 of the 3 teeth (2 supports and 1 pontic) that make up the bridge, the whole bridge may need to be replaced as all three teeth are now linked together.



Bridge Concept



Porcelain Bridge

An implant uses the bone that used to hold a missing tooth to replace it. A titanium implant is surgically placed into the jaw bone where the missing tooth used to be. The bone is allowed to heal around the implant, usually for 2 to 3 months. If the bone has taken the implant and the implant is stable, a crown can be made to attach to the implant to replace the missing tooth. An implant is a strong, long term, non-removable option to replace a tooth but requires surgery to place the implant and there is a risk the implant is rejected by your body. In some cases there may not be enough bone to place an implant so that additional surgery such as bone grafting may be needed in order for an implant to be placed.



Implant Crown on X-ray



Implant Crown in Mouth

At Central Brisbane Dental, we use trusted Australian Dental Technicians and Dental Laboratories to make our dentures, bridges and implant crowns to ensure great fit, aesthetics and strength. We refer you to a specialist periodontist or oral surgeon for the surgical phase of implant treatment to ensure the best chance of successful implant surgery before carrying out the restorative phase for you at the practice. Although we can restore all implant types, we favour Straumann implants.