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## Understanding your New Dentures

A great deal of skill has been used in constructing your new dentures and they must be cared for if you are to get the best service from them. Nothing has been found to equal healthy, natural teeth, but dentistry has made great progress in replacing them with artificial ones. These cannot be expected to do everything that natural teeth do, but, provided they are used sensibly, they will enable you to eat and speak quite satisfactorily.

### First impressions

The teeth on your dentures have been placed as near as possible to the exact position your natural teeth occupied. This will support your lips and cheeks and give you as natural an appearance as possible. You can expect to undergo a period of awkwardness while getting used to the dentures. Your first reaction may be that you have suddenly acquired a tremendous mouthful and that your lips are being pushed forward excessively by teeth that seem too big. This should not worry you, because the feeling of fullness will soon wear

off as you become accustomed to the new dentures in your mouth. You may think that because they feel very big to you, they will appear so to others. This is not so and there should be no need for embarrassment. You may have a feeling of gagging or excessive salivation, but after you have worn the dentures for a short time, these sensations will disappear. While you are learning to use your dentures, it is necessary to have patience. Control of your dentures may be difficult at first, but gradually it will become automatic. The time required to become accustomed to new dentures varies considerably with each individual: some master their dentures in a very short time; others require weeks of patience to do so. **It usually takes an average of four to eight weeks to become fully accustomed to your dentures.**

### Speaking

Speaking may seem strange or even difficult at first. This is because your tongue has to learn where the teeth are. It is a good idea to read aloud to yourself for short periods during the first few days. Take occasional sips of water from a glass, as reading aloud makes your mouth feel dry. There is no need to be embarrassed about speaking; other people are much less aware of the awkwardness than you are. This is because your own voice doesn't

sound the same to other people as it does to you. When you hear yourself speak, most of the sound reaches your ears by means of vibrations in the bones of the jaw and skull; this varies from the sound that travels through the air in the ordinary way. Therefore, any small changes become much more noticeable to the speaker than to anyone else.

### **Taste**

Patients frequently report that the sense of taste is affected when they first wear dentures. They sometimes think that this is caused by the palate being covered by the dentures. In fact, taste buds are only present on the tongue, not in the palate. There are two reasons why food seems to lose some of its taste: first, the feeling of the food being squashed against the palate is lost; second, although the taste buds are working quite normally, the message they send to the brain is interrupted by the very large number of other messages from the sensory nerves in the mouth, telling the brain that a strange new object is in the mouth. As you become more accustomed to your dentures, your brain pays less attention to these messages from the taste buds. When this happens, food regains its taste.

### **Eating**

When you begin eating with your new dentures, it is important to start slowly. Eating may present difficulties. In fact, it is the most difficult part of mastering your new dentures. You must not be discouraged if you experience a few failures at first: natural teeth are firmly fixed in bone, while artificial dentures only rest on the bone. When chewing on one side, you may notice a tendency for the dentures to tip and loosen on the opposite side. Attempt to chew food on both sides with the teeth. This will help prevent your dentures from tipping. Provided you are patient and spend the necessary time practicing. You will learn to control the dentures automatically by using the muscles of mastication in your mouth. All the muscles must learn what they should and should not do. With some new dentures, it may have been necessary to increase the height of your upper and lower teeth so as to have them contact sooner. This may have been done through the use of an appliance called an occlusal splint. With a change such as this, you will have to develop new chewing habits simply because you will be chewing your food at a different position than that of your old dentures. Begin with eating food that does not need hard chewing. Also, take smaller

mouthfuls and chew slowly and evenly. At first, do not bite off food with your front teeth; you will learn to do that later. Cut the food into smaller pieces that can easily be put into your mouth. As you become more skilled at using your dentures, you will be able to try harder and tougher foods. Eventually, you will be able to use your front teeth for biting. Remember, with your natural teeth you bit and pulled, but with dentures you bite and push. You may also have difficulty with very thin foods such as lettuce and the skins of apples or tomatoes. You will find apples easy to eat if you first peel and cut them into slices or quarters.

## **Saliva**

Because an artificial denture is a new object in the mouth, you may at first develop an excessive flow of saliva. This reaction is perfectly natural and, after a while, it will reduce as you become accustomed to the dentures. The best way to overcome this temporary discomfort is to persevere in wearing the dentures. The use of a peppermint candy or gum helps. In any case, if you bear in mind that a flow of saliva has always been going on unnoticed in your mouth before you started using your dentures, you quickly realize that it is quite a normal condition. The dentures also require a certain amount of saliva to

work properly. A dry mouth, also called Xerostamia, may cause the dentures to feel loose and occasionally sore as well. See your medical doctor should this condition exist.

## **Night time**

Dentures should normally be left out of the mouth at night, especially if you have a tendency to grind your teeth when you sleep. This may cause a certain amount of distress in some patients. If this occurs, leave the dentures in during the night. If you do insist on wearing your dentures, then you should purchase a very soft bristle toothbrush. Wet this brush with water and brush your gums and palate lightly at bedtime with your dentures out, and again in the morning. This brushing helps to keep your mouth healthy by helping the blood circulate in the area. If new dentures are left out for longer than overnight, irritated areas may swell and you may have difficulty in wearing the dentures comfortably. When you are not wearing the dentures, always put them in water; never let them dry out or place them in hot water, as they will warp and no longer fit properly.

## **Cleaning**

Dentures, like natural teeth, must be kept clean and free from deposits to avoid permanent staining.

A dirty denture looks unpleasant, causes bad breath and is very unhygienic. To keep your dentures clean you must rinse them in warm -not hot- water, and rinse out your mouth after every meal. If simple rinsing will not clean the dentures thoroughly, a denture brush or toothbrush may be used to remove loose food from between the teeth. Every night, the dentures should be cleaned with a brush. Abrasive powders or regular toothpaste should never be used as these scratch the denture surface, making them more difficult to clean. When brushing your dentures, always take the precaution of having a few inches of water in the wash basin to avoid breaking your dentures if you were to drop it. It is also advisable to spread a cloth or flannel in the basin for the same reason. Always hold the lower denture on the side you are brushing, never in the palm of your hand, as this may cause them to break.

Every night, you should use a denture cleanser which may be purchased at a pharmacy, but remember to brush off saliva and any food debris before you put the dentures into a bath of cleanser. These denture cleansers are in powder, liquid or tablet form and must be mixed with water according to the manufacturer's instructions. Some of the ingredients are very strong, so do not use more

than the instructions state. Soaking for a few minutes is not usually sufficient, even though the denture may look clean. Several hours of immersion is desirable such as overnight cleaning. Occasionally, soaking your dentures in undiluted vinegar is useful in removing persistent stains and calculus. Ultrasonic cleaners are very effective and may be purchased. A permanent stain resistant coating can be placed on your dentures so as to make them impervious to stains. This is also available through us and can be put on the dentures in about four hours.

### **Soreness**

You may find that your mouth becomes sore when you are wearing the dentures. An appointment will be given for inspection so that all the necessary adjustments can be made. A new denture will settle in approximately 2-4 weeks. **Even if your mouth is sore, please be sure to wear your dentures for the whole of the day before your appointment, otherwise it may be difficult to tell where the pressure spot is.** At first, you may also find that you bite your cheeks or tongue, but this usually corrects itself after a short time when the muscles have adjusted themselves to the new support. Depending on the amount and rate of change occurring in the mouth,

an individual may require up to four adjustment appointments and up to one month to adapt to new dentures.

## **Adapting**

Many patients think complete dentures should be as sufficient as the natural dentition. Such is never possible, and one observation will illustrate the reasons. A person with healthy teeth and supporting tissues is capable of exerting at least 20 times the force that a patient with dentures can exert. Thus, it is apparent the crushing and shearing forces are not as strong and effective as those in natural teeth, and the patient wearing dentures cannot realistically expect to perform as efficiently as with natural teeth. Another problem is the patient who has no lower ridge. The ridge is flat, and the lower denture has no outside flanges. **These patients must learn to accept more limitations than normal. The denture can easily be displaced and learning to chew in straight up and down strokes is absolutely essential. Such a patient should accept changes in selection of foods to accommodate the impaired condition which exists.** Patients with such conditions would benefit tremendously from implants - dentures that are held in place by two Titanium Posts which are screwed into the lower jaw. See us for more information or a referral.

An increasing problem is the clenching of the teeth during the day. It occurs in all age groups and creates chronic soreness which can result in an amazing loss of bone in a relatively short time. Many patients will insist they are unaware of clenching. Some do it only under certain conditions, or at certain times of the day. Some say they do so because the dentures are loose. But whatever the reason, it must be stopped if one is to avoid serious damage to the mouth. Returning to us for adjustments provides only temporary relief, and the time will soon come when we can no longer help you. People who clench their teeth are presenting us with a problem ordinarily beyond our ability to control. If we were to treat this as strictly a dental problem, one would be told to keep the lower denture out.. Not wearing the lower denture would prevent clenching. If you refuse to do this, you must either break the habit or suffer serious consequences. If you have made a sincere effort to avoid clenching, but to no avail, a permanent soft liner can be placed on the lower denture to reduce the pressure significantly.

The last problem is chronic soreness of the lower ridge with patients whose alcoholic intake is beyond their own individual tolerance. We are not discussing

alcoholism, but a large group of people who drink more than average. For reasons too technical to discuss here, it is a fact that the tissues of the mouth will suffer when some people drink alcoholic beverages in excess. The soreness is usually more acute if there has also been a considerable loss of the ridge. Here again, the problem is common to all age groups, and all types of mouths. How much or how often you drink is not for us to say, but if you are one of the many who are suffering from chronic soreness of the lower ridge, check your drinking habits. Moderation may be your only solution to a successful denture service. This is another example of a dental problem beyond the control of a dentist. Consultation with your physician is indicated.

### **Future considerations**

Although your dentures will keep their shape, your mouth, like the rest of your body, is constantly changing. **The bone which supports the denture can recede and shrink away. This can make dentures loose and less stable, impair your ability to chew and give you deep ageing lines and wrinkles.** The teeth of the dentures may also become worn and require renewal. When dentures feel loose, many people resort to the adhesive powders or pastes to hold them in position. While these

aids may be useful on a temporary basis they should not be used routinely. The looseness is a sign that natural resorption of the bone has occurred. Prolonged wearing of the dentures in this condition will accelerate the loss of bone.

These are products available which one can use to reline or repair one's dentures. **DO NOT DO IT YOURSELF.** Many people have found out the hard way that do-it-yourself relining can cause serious and irreversible harm to your health. If a denture is improperly relined at home, the excessive bulk and resulting pressure can cause the bone to shrink away more rapidly. When this bony ridge is gone, it is gone forever. Not only will these dentures be useless, but it will be far more difficult for us to make new ones. We can make new dentures to fit damaged bone lost but the do-it-yourself reliners can also cause irritation to the soft tissues of the mouth. Constant irritation can lead to oral lesions, open sores, and possibly contribute to the development of more serious problems.