



columbus family dental care
David A. Dixon, DDS and Associates

THE USE & CARE OF COMPLETE DENTURES

In order for you to receive the maximum possible service and satisfaction from your new dentures, it is important to know certain things – whether you have previously worn dentures or not. The purpose of this instruction is to assist you in the transition from your own natural teeth or a previous denture, to your new dentures.

At the onset, you should understand that no denture, whether it be complete or partial, will ever function as efficiently as the original natural teeth. Experienced denture wearers with well-fitting dentures have only 20 percent of the chewing efficiency they had with their natural teeth. Learning to wear and use artificial dentures is a time-consuming process which demands patience and determination and the length of time required will vary from person to person. Your mental attitude is of utmost importance; do not expect too much from your dentures, especially at first, and do not become discouraged either, as thousands of people are getting along fine with dentures and so can you.

For the first few days, you should expect only to be able to keep them in your mouth and not much more. The feeling of bulk or unusual fullness is common, especially if this is your first experience with dentures. This will subside over time. Also you will notice an abundance of saliva. After a few days your salivary glands will adjust themselves and resume their normal function.

The oral tissues supporting your dentures were never intended to be used in this manner. Some ridges (the horseshoe-shaped areas of the mouth that the dentures rest on) have thick and resilient tissue covering the underlying bone and this enables the individual to wear their denture comfortably and to chew with minimum discomfort. Other ridges have thin tissues covering the bone and therefore don't provide a good cushion between the bone and the denture. These ridges are easily irritated, constantly painful, and it is almost impossible for these individuals to comfortably wear and utilize dentures in the usual way. Over time, however, the tissues of the mouth gradually accept the dentures.

Dentures are less self-cleaning than natural teeth, so they should be removed and brushed after each meal as tartar and stain will buildup fast. You should have two brushes, a hard-bristle denture brush for brushing the denture and a regular soft toothbrush for brushing the gums, roof of the mouth, and tongue. Any toothpaste will work fine, and you should regularly use a mouthwash to reduce germs and keep your mouth fresh. It is best to leave them out of the mouth for an 8 hour period everyday to permit the mouth tissues to "breathe" and recover from the wear and tear of the pressures exerted on them. Yeast infections are common with those who wear them 24 hours a day. After they have been scrubbed, soak them in water. You may use an efferdent tablet or some mouthwash in the water. Also, be careful not to drop the dentures when cleaning them as the teeth can chip or break easily.

Adjustments of the dentures are almost always necessary before they become comfortable. Modern denture materials are very stable and reliable and do not change over time. However, the tissues of the mouth (the ridges) do change and some individuals exhibit this change more than others. Most changes occur during the first few months after the teeth are removed – the ridges shrink. It may, therefore, be necessary to have dentures relined (refitted) after some period of time (usually one year) and sometimes to have the bite periodically adjusted. Some mouths change so rapidly that replacement dentures may be needed after a relatively short time. There is such a wide individual difference in this respect that there are no hard and fast rules, but you should be aware that the supporting tissues will change and some adjustments will be necessary to keep the dentures comfortable and your mouth healthy.

1645 Holt Road • Columbus, OH 43228
Phone: 614-878-1397 • Fax: 614-878-1336
www.columbusfamilydentalcare.com

A General Dentistry Practice

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Some people experience a gagging sensation when they first wear dentures. This is largely a mental reaction and will be overcome as the dentures are worn – it has nothing to do with how they are made. If you feel the urge to gag, close your mouth, breathe through your nose, and relax. Another hurdle to overcome is speaking. Try reading aloud at home. Once again, don't get discouraged.

The biggest problem by far is relearning to eat. Previous eating habits must be broken and new ones quickly learned. It is a good idea to avoid chewing much at first, at least until the dentures begin to feel like part of your mouth and not like a bulky foreign object. For the first few weeks, eat only soft foods, especially if this is your first experience with dentures. You will learn by experimenting that biting in some ways upsets the dentures, while biting in other ways seats them in place. You must learn to chew on both sides of your back teeth at the same time. Break or cut a normal bite of food into two pieces and place one piece on each side before starting to chew them. After a time this becomes a habit and you will not realize that you are chewing any differently than you did before. Hard foods combined with unskillful use of your dentures will cause a lot of irritation no matter how good the dentures may be. Learn to eat in stages. First learn to swallow and then learn to chew. Practice on foods that normally require little chewing, such as pasta or mashed potatoes, to get the feel of chewing. Then try some light brittle foods such as crackers. With dentures, chewing will mostly be done with your knife and fork. Remember to eat slowly, with smaller bites, and be patient. And above all, always wear your new dentures at mealtime despite difficulties eating. Never go back to your old dentures or do without. This will only prolong the adjustment period.

You will not be able to bite much on your front teeth without upsetting the dentures. The front teeth are really for appearance only and are placed out in front of the ridges; therefore, dentures tip when pressure is put on these teeth, and this can result in ridge destruction. Some people eventually learn to bite into apples and corn-on-the-cob, but too much biting with the front teeth is harmful on the ridges. Try to cut or break up your food first. Also be careful with chewing gum – some brands are stickier than others.

You must develop chewing and swallowing habits which tend to seat your dentures and discard those which tend to dislodge them. Occasional "light" use of adhesive powders is acceptable to improve the stickiness of the saliva under the denture; but, the long term use of adhesives only creates a "false fit" which will help to maintain habits that can be destructive to the supporting ridges. When a denture no longer stays in place, it means that the ridge it fits on has sufficiently changed to allow excessive movement and a loose fit. Since the denture has never changed, it is the denture wearer rather than the denture that becomes loose. A poor fitting denture exerts excessive pressure on the ridge in some places and no pressure at all in other places. This uneven combination of pressures will cause the ridges to wear away; and, over the years there may not be any ridges left for future dentures to fit over. We recommend that you have an oral examination every year or so to evaluate your dentures and the health of your mouth.

If your denture was inserted the same day your teeth were removed or soon afterward, rinse your mouth with warm salt water (1/4 tsp. salt to 8 oz. water) as often as possible. This is soothing and helps with healing.

This process is not easy, so please be patient. It is a new skill that must be learned and it takes perseverance and determination. Good luck and if you have any questions or need any adjustments, don't hesitate to call our office.

Thank you,

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