

Denture Wearers Advice Sheet

Whether you are new to dentures or a long time denture wearer, new teeth can take some time to adjust to you and you to them.

First Few Days

New dentures nearly always feel strange even if it is a close copy of an old denture or your natural teeth. At first they can feel big in your mouth and may take several days/weeks to settle down. Excessive saliva can initially occur as the brain thinks you have food in your mouth, but saliva is what helps keep your dentures in place through suction.

If you've had extractions prior to fitting of a new denture then the denture shouldn't be removed for 24 hours to help healing of the extraction site. Clean with salt water or as directed by your dentist.

Sore spots can occur where the denture base extends onto the soft tissue especially if you're a new denture wearer or you have had extractions and a denture fitted straight away. After extractions the mouth can be swollen which can affect the fit of the denture until the swelling has reduced.

However, the more you wear your new denture the quicker you will learn how to wear it, and perseverance is key.

Gaining Control Of Your New Dentures.

The younger you are when you acquire your first denture, the easier it will be to adapt to it. Getting older extends the time it takes us to adapt to new things and this is especially true with dentures. Your lips, gums, tongue and cheeks all help in keeping your dentures in place and need time to learn the necessary skills to keep your denture in place. Sometimes even inserting or removing the denture will need practice and inserting/removing either incorrectly can be painful and may damage the denture or your teeth/gums.

Using denture glues/fixatives are a great help but only in the short term. Continued use not only costs more money but means you never fully learn how to hold the dentures in place, the glue is doing that for you! That doesn't mean glue is not useful, if you are going to a function and don't want the embarrassment of your denture moving, then glue/fixative is very helpful but this should be used sparingly.

Speaking And Eating

Due to the nature of dentures the patients palate is often covered with the denture base material which can affect pronunciation of certain words/letters. The tongue will adjust to this over a day or two in most cases and keeping the dentures in will help resolve this quicker.

Eating with dentures will take practice and different foods will offer different challenges. Sucking hard boiled sweets is a good aid in helping to learn control of your dentures when first fitted. Try softer foods to begin with, before progressing onto harder foods, sticky foods will be the most challenging and chewing slower to begin with will help.

Although your dentures can feel comfortable when eating, your denture further stresses your gums and soft tissues which can lead to sore spots and if untreated can result in localised ulcers. Lower dentures are more prone to sore spots/ulcerations due to the reduced support offered by the underlying bone and surrounding soft tissues.

Sore spots can be resolved by spot grinding the denture base where the gums/soft tissues are sore/red/ulcerated and the mouth should heal in a few days. If any lesion/mark doesn't heal after 2 weeks further advice should be sought immediately from your dentist or GP.

Many patients complain about food getting under their dentures! Remember when you last had tooth ache? It was possibly caused by food getting under your gums! Food goes everywhere and while the dentures are designed to offer the best seal to your gums, certain foods will inevitably get under your denture. Regular maintenance of your denture will help prevent this as best as possible.

Cleaning Your Dentures

Whether you still have remaining natural teeth or have no teeth at all, keeping your mouth clean is just as important with dentures. You should brush your remaining teeth, dentures, gums and tongue at least twice a day with fluoride toothpaste to prevent tooth decay, gum disease, bad breath and unclean dentures can also lead to higher rates of oral thrush.

Although regular toothpaste can be used on dentures, they are usually abrasive and may cause undue wear on your denture especially if you are brushing too hard. Warm soapy water is best and care should be taken to clean every aspect of your denture. If hard cement-like areas begin to appear it is due to insufficient cleaning and these areas will need to be mechanically cleaned i.e with a dental cutting bur/drill.

Depending on your manual dexterity, cleaning your denture over a towel or a partially water filled sink will help prevent breakages if you inadvertently drop them.

There are numerous "cleaning solutions" available and if used correctly can be useful. However in my experience patients tend not to follow the instructions properly and this can lead to "bleaching" of your denture which is harmful to the physical properties of the denture materials used.

Sleeping with Dentures

One person I treated said their partner didn't know they had dentures so they always slept with their dentures in! The current advice is to not wear your dentures at night but if you choose to, and it is your choice; then find time during the day to take them out, ideally the more time during the day the better. This gives the gums/tissues time to recover from the trauma of wearing dentures and consequently relieves the pressure on the underlying bone which studies have shown can resorb quicker if dentures are worn 24 hours a day.

Leaving in warm water seems popular advice to prevent the denture "warping" but in my experience modern plastics are much more stable and aren't prone to this problem. However, soaking your denture against bacterial infection is especially important for people with reduced salivary flow, dry mouth syndrome due to taking certain medications/drugs and people with a diminished immune system. Dentures are porous in nature and brushing twice a day may remove visible contaminants but only soaking in an appropriate denture cleaning solution will reduce the bacterial load effectively.

I would certainly NOT recommend leaving a denture in warm water over night! This will only encourage bacterial growth.

Dental Check-Ups

A patient having lost their last tooth thinks, Hooray, no more dental appointments! Regular check-ups are advised to screen for oral health issues as mouth cancer rates have continued to rise over the last 10 years. In addition to oral screening, the fit and functionality of your current denture can be ascertained and advisory information offered.

My Current Denture is the Best

I have seen patients who have worn their current denture for 30 years!! This is great value for money but prolonged wearing of an ill-fitting denture can cause underlying bone damage resulting in a “flabby ridge” which the patient is generally unaware of. This is where the gums are no longer firm as once before and the ridge (gums) offer little support to the denture which may feel loose, rock or even fall out.

Patients that wear dentures in excess of 10 years can have greater trouble adapting to their new denture and having possibly spent upwards of £500 on a new denture, may revert back to wearing their old dentures, which some patients say “they never have any problems with”. The denture is like an old pair of shoes knackered but feel lovely, aren't really doing what they should do but the patient “manages”, the denture looks awful (which is why most patients want new dentures) but the patient ignores/overlooks that.

Comparing New to Old

An old set of dentures is just that an old set. Your mouth is constantly changing and some more than others, so while your current denture looks one way, a new denture may look somewhat different and comparing is not always helpful. For instance; my current denture extends to here and is this long, but the new one looks shorter? As you get older, where teeth have been extracted the underlying bone resorbs over time, so the “gum height” reduces from point A to point B, so conversely the new denture may be shorter as a result. However if the previous denture was underextended due to an extraction, after a period of healing the new denture may be longer to compensate for the shrinkage.

The best time to mention anything that you are unhappy with is before the final visit!! At the final appointment the denture can not be easily adjusted and will probably need remaking. Communication is key.

After Care

Once you have your denture fitted, it is normal to have a review 1-4 weeks later. This is normal and part of the process and can help eliminate denture sore spots, bite high spots or even just to make sure everything is to your satisfaction.

If in doubt about any point mentioned in this document please feel free to call and discuss your queries.