

# Complete and Partial Dentures

## Removable Prosthesis

The discussion below is related to a removable prosthesis, which is taken in and out of the mouth.

### **Complete Denture:**

A complete denture is a prosthesis that provides a complete replacement of all the missing teeth. The dental term for the complete lack of teeth in one arch (upper or lower arch) is termed edentulous. The upper arch (maxilla or maxillary) and lower arch (mandibular or mandible) may both be edentulous, or there may be a combination of one arch being edentulous, and the other arch having all (or most) or the teeth, or both arches being edentulous. Complete dentures are made out of teeth comprised of dense acrylic composite resin to simulate natural teeth, that is either bonded to (traditional denture) or milled with (digital denture) the base that is tissue colored. The base is made out methyl methacrylate acrylic resin that is made to simulate the missing tissue, and adapted to the tissue and muscle borders to fit each individual's anatomy.

### **Partial Denture:**

So, logically a partial denture is one where some teeth that need to be replaced. There are several options for partial dentures. These will be presented below from the best choice, and other alternate choices, also with decreasing fees.

1. *Metal framework, acrylic resin based partial denture.* This is a prosthesis made of a combination of a custom fit metal framework for strength and retention, combined with teeth and a tissue colored base. The metal provides strength and metal clasps to hold the partial denture to “anchor” teeth. In addition, compared to an all acrylic resin or flexible partial denture (below) it is thinner in many areas and adapts to the tissue and teeth better, and allows transference of heat and cold, which allows for amore natural feel. The metal also has “rest seats” to allow support from the teeth and metal clasps that hold the partial in place.
2. *Flexible partial denture.* A flexible partial denture is made of a nylon type material for the base and clasps (no metal), except for the teeth. The acceptance of these varies. Many love these prosthesis and other do not like them. The main reason is that this prosthesis is purely tissue supported which may be uncomfortable due to pressure, and the teeth have flexible clasps, not quite as rigid and are much larger than comparable metal clasps. Due to the soft nature of the base material it will scratch more easily and the lifespan with normal use and cleaning may only be 3-4 years. While it may still be functional, the base is usually discolored and very scratched. Polishing is difficult due to the soft nature, and repolishing can remove more material, thinning and potentially weakening the prosthesis. Lastly it is virtually impossible to repair these, and they can only really be adjusted, not added to if changes need to be made.

3. *All acrylic provisional (temporary) or transitional prosthesis.* The term *all acrylic* would also normally include metal clasps for retention. In rare cases a simple 1 or even 4 tooth provisional can be fabricated without clasps, using internal retention from undercuts of the palatal or lingual teeth for retention, but usually with the aid of a soft reline to allow easy placement and removal. Either way an all acrylic provisional is intended for short term usage, say 6 months, while healing and preparing for a definitive metal based partial denture. Although this is the intent, some patients find these comfortable and adequate for what they need and are very happy with them as a long term solution to missing teeth. While there are several downsides to using these long term, if they are working, great!

**If you have any questions about complete and partial dentures, please feel free to ask us.**