



Dentures: What You Should Know

Success in wearing a denture depends more upon you than upon any other factor. If you meet the challenge with determination, you will be surprised at the short time it will take you to achieve mastery.

Dentures are replacements for natural teeth, but they are **not** teeth. A denture is a sophisticated acrylic appliance used to restore function and esthetics. A patient receiving an artificial eye would not expect restored sight. Thus, you must realize that a denture has limitations, and it will never be as satisfactory as natural teeth. However, your experience with dentures can be very successful.

To help you get off to the right start and help our dentures feel like a natural part of you, read “Ten Rules for Denture Wearers.” Together, with our dentist’s advice and your confident attitude, you can achieve denture satisfaction.

Ten Rules for Denture Wearers

1. Patience- Learning to wear a denture takes time. Follow your dentist’s advice and don’t become discouraged. Don’t listen to friends who tell you how easy it was for them. They are either bragging or their memories are poor.
2. Lowers- A lower denture usually takes far longer to master than an upper. Take your time; don’t worry if your tongue feels strange or restricted. It will soon accustom itself to the new position. Eventually your tongue will learn to hold the lower denture stabilizing it during speech.
3. Chewing- Eat only soft foods for the first few days, then as you progress to more solid foods, chew slowly and evenly so that you grow accustomed to managing your denture. Place food on both sides of the back teeth, and then chew in an up-and-down motion pushing your food upward to stabilize your denture. The longer you take for a meal, the sooner you will master your denture.
4. Biting- Don’t take large bites. Try cutting food into small portions. Do not bite with the front teeth, they are only for show and a warm and friendly smile! The supporting structures beneath the front of the dentures are damaged with biting and severe resorption of your ridge may result. The back part of your mouth is much better equipped to withstand biting forces.
5. Sore spots- You will experience some pain and discomfort. When sore spots develop on the gums, please visit your dentist for relief.
6. Speech- If you have a tendency to blur your words, or your speech seems difficult, then practice reading out loud or speaking in the mirror. The old adage, “Practice Makes Perfect,” certainly applies to dentures.
7. Cleaning- An unclean denture is never healthy, attractive, or comfortable. Clean your denture every morning and night with warm water and a mild dish soap. Toothpaste is not ideal as the abrasives will scratch the acrylic over time.
8. Wear and Care – Please remove your denture(s) EVERY night. As any denture may warp if it dries out, keep yours in water or denture cleaning solution when it is out of your mouth. Coughing, sneezing, and nausea can quickly dislodge the denture. If you feel such as this coming on, cover your mouth with your hands or handkerchief, or remove the denture.
9. Tissue Change- Remember your gum tissues, like all other tissues in our bodies, change with age. Thus, it is important that you visit your dentist annually for a complete denture checkup. An older denture may be relined to improve the fit, or it may be necessary to have a new denture made.
10. Adjustments- Never attempt to repair, reline, or adjust your denture in any way. Only your dentist is qualified to handle this important health matter. An improper, ill-fitting denture can be very destructive to oral tissues.

Daily Cleaning is Vital to Your Health

Keeping a clean denture is essential to your satisfaction. An unclean denture may irritate the soft tissues of your mouth or cause unpleasant odor. Cleaning a denture is fast and easy. A clean denture fits better, feels better, and looks better. Your confidence in your clean denture helps you wear it naturally.

Toothpaste and toothbrushes used for natural teeth are not designed for cleaning dentures. They are too abrasive and will damage the surface of the denture. Never use scouring powders, as this will also damage the surface of the denture. Do not immerse your dentures in boiling hot water as they will warp and no longer fit.

There are two effective and safe ways for cleaning your denture, mechanical cleansing and soaking in a denture cleanser. The first should be done on a daily basis. The cleansing solution should be used at least once a week. Many denture wearers soak their dentures overnight in a cleansing solution following a mechanical cleaning with a denture brush. Use a brush specifically designed for dentures. Denture brushes may be purchased at most drug stores and discount stores (K-Mart, Wal-Mart, etc.) Always hold a denture water when brushing or rinsing it. If you drop it. The water will cushion the fall and prevent breakage. A soft soap, such as dish soap, is effective when used with the brush.

Cleansing solutions are also available at most drug and discount stores. If your denture has any metal parts, consult your dentist to help in selecting a cleansing solution.

Improving your oral health.

Follow these simple suggestions to have a healthy mouth:

1. Leave your dentures out 8 out of every 24 hours. It is usually best to leave them out a night.
2. Return for regular dental examinations of your mouth. The denture does not change, but your mouth will. For this reason, the health of your mouth should be checked annually.
3. Keep your mouth clean by brushing with a soft brush.
4. Select foods that do not cause the dentures to tip. Each patient must judge this for his own case. Excessive tipping and skidding of your dentures causes a great amount of damage to supporting bone and tissues.
5. It is very important that you do not clench or grind your dentures. Some patients have more trouble with this than others do. Practice keeping your teeth apart when you are not using them.
6. Oral tissues should be massaged on a daily basis. Finger massage is usually adequate. Your tissues in your mouth require the stimulation to help slow resorption of the denture ridges and maintain adequate circulation within the tissues. Chewing several pieces of gum (sugar-free of course!) is a wonderful way to massage your gums.

Continuing dental care protects your denture-bearing tissues.

As we age our bodies change with the passing of time. Your mouth will also change. Your denture was made to fit your mouth as it is today, but with time the fit of your denture will not be as good. Many denture wearers tend not to notice the gradual changes, yet they can be very damaging to your mouth. Thus, continuing dental care is an absolute necessity. Dental authorities estimate a new denture may normally be indicated every three to five years for optimum health.