

Prosthodontics of Central Indiana
11405 N. Pennsylvania St. Suite 110 Carmel, IN 46032

Instructions for patients receiving new complete dentures and overdentures

Today, your new dentures were placed. After several weeks of clinical procedures, it is time to wear and use the new prostheses. These notes are to help you through the first few weeks of new denture wear which are rarely easy.

New dentures are an improved but different shape to the old dentures. It takes time for the gums and the muscles of the mouth (which are in the tongue, cheeks, and lips), to get used to the new shapes and to learn to control them. Control takes time and practice. It may also take a little time to get used to the new appearance in the same way that a new hairstyle takes time to appear normal.

Every effort was made at the placement appointment to make the dentures comfortable. However, it is not until the dentures have been in the mouth for a while that we can tell where adjustments need to be made. It may take several more appointments before things are really comfortable. It is important that you are available over the next few weeks to return for adjustments. The time needed for familiarization varies between individuals. Try not to listen to comments from relatives and friends, who may give you expectations based on an entirely different set of circumstances. A general guide would be to allow six to eight weeks to pass before expecting to function with full confidence.

FIRST STEPS

- Insertion and removal:

Practice a few times in the bathroom over a sink containing water. This way if the denture is accidentally dropped, there is no risk of damage. Using a mirror, remove the lower denture first. It should be rotated to allow one side to come out before the other. If you open the mouth about halfway instead of very wide, it will be easier to rotate the denture past the cheek. Sometimes, the finger of the other hand will be required to hold back the corner of the mouth. The upper denture will usually have to have its “seal” broken by inserting a finger over the upper border about halfway back on one side. Once loose, it can be removed without rotation if you remember to keep the mouth halfway open. Rinse the dentures then practice insertion. Remember always to moisten them before insertion. Place the upper denture first making sure it is the right way up! Give it a firm upward push with your thumb in the center of the palate, to make sure it is well seated. The lower denture should be rotated in, one side after the other. The tongue should be raised slightly as the denture goes in, and then positioned down over the biting surface of the lower teeth.

- Familiarization:

Allow the tongue to feel the dentures all over. Practice smiling, yawning, and coughing in front of the mirror. These movements will tend to unseat the dentures at first but with practice, the facial muscles will learn to make compensating movements to prevent this from happening.

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- Salivation:

It is common to find that saliva production increases when new dentures are placed. This problem should last only for a few days, and as you get used to the dentures, salivation will return to normal.

- Adhesives:

We do not encourage the use of denture adhesives during the learning period, because it can make the muscles lazy and create dependence on the adhesive. Adhesive can be difficult to remove from a denture, can provide a culture medium for bacteria, and, if the layer is thick, it can change the biting relationship of the teeth and lead to damage of the bone and gum beneath. Please do not use adhesive unless Dr. Phasuk or Dr. Abey specifically recommends it for your case.

SPEAKING AND CHEWING

- Speaking and chewing require practice. You should practice by reading aloud or talking on the telephone. The “S” sound commonly causes difficulty at first, but this is something that will sound worse to you than the person listening, so try to ignore it and practice with close family and friends before speaking in public.

- Plan to eat only soft foods for the first few days and then to build up to more challenging, chewy foods after your first two post operative appointments. Eat on your own or with a close companion for those first meals, to avoid any embarrassing moments in public. During this period, you may need to adapt your normal diet slightly eg. minced beef instead of steak, soft bread instead of toast, etc. Cut everything into bite-sized pieces before placing in the mouth. Try to eat on the back teeth only, but try to use both sides at once. Chew thoroughly. Instead of biting into food with the front teeth, cut it first into a bite-sized piece. Biting on the front teeth may come with time, but should not be tried until reasonable chewing skill has been acquired. It is probably unrealistic to expect to be able to bite into a head of corn on the cob with complete dentures. They are a substitute for no teeth rather than a third set of teeth!

- You may find that you bite your cheeks or tongue at first. This will usually correct after a few days, but you may need to leave one of the dentures out for a day or two to allow the sore area to heal.

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CLEANING THE DENTURES

- Dental plaque forms on dentures just as it forms on natural teeth. It can irritate the gums and contribute to further bone loss. Debris and plaque on dentures looks unsightly and can cause odors. The dentures should be removed and brushed and rinsed after every meal. They should be removed from the mouth at bedtime and brushed thoroughly before being left to soak overnight in a proprietary denture cleanser. Brushing may be done either with a regular toothbrush or denture toothbrush and denture toothpaste, which is non-abrasive, or liquid hand soap. Take care to rinse thoroughly after cleansing with liquid hand soap.
- Toothpastes sold for use on dentures are non-abrasive and will not damage the acrylic resin, whereas conventional toothpaste has abrasives which will wear the resin. Pay particular attention to the surface of the denture that fits against the gums and the cracks between the teeth. From time to time, a disclosing solution should be used on the dentures after cleaning to see how good a result is obtained. If you are unsure of how to do this, please ask to be shown by us.
- An Ultrasonic Denture Cleanser (e.g. the SONIC SCRUB, Clairol Inc.) could be used as long as the visible debris has been removed first. It should be used with a denture cleansing solution.
- To prevent calculus (tartar) from forming, we advise soaking the dentures once a week in a solution of household vinegar and water (50:50) instead of denture cleanser.

AT NIGHT

For the first week, please wear the dentures at night. This will allow you to get used to them faster. After the first week, leave the dentures out of the mouth at nighttime. This habit allows the supporting gum and bone to rest and in the long term will reduce the amount of bone loss. If leaving the teeth out at night causes discomfort from the facial muscles or jaw joints, please see us for advice.

Soak the dentures overnight after cleaning thoroughly as described above. They should be soaked in one of the store-bought cleansing solutions.

PAIN OR DISCOMFORT

There is always some discomfort for the first few days of wearing new dentures. Dr. Abey or Dr. Phasuk will arrange to see you the day following placement so that any potential problems can be identified and adjustments made early. It is important to keep the dentures in place in the mouth during this first 24-hour period. Dr. Abey or Dr. Phasuk will arrange to see you again two or three days after the first post-op appointment to check again on your progress and make any further adjustments.

Occasionally, patients need one or two further visits for adjustments, but the majority are comfortable following the two post placement visits. Hot salt-water mouthwashes should be used to soothe and heal any sore areas until your next appointment. Please do not use any

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painkilling creams or potions in the mouth, as they will not treat the cause of the problem. Sucking on an aspirin or other pain-controlling pill will cause a painful burn.

CONTINUING CARE

The mouth is a constantly changing environment and the gums and bone, which support dentures, change slowly with time. The rate of bone loss beneath complete dentures is accelerated by poorly fitting dentures. Therefore, we attach great importance to detecting any deterioration in fit as early as possible so that it may be rectified.

The rate at which the mouth alters is different for each individual and will be affected by general health, drug therapy, and diet. Conditions such as osteoporosis may increase bone loss, and if this condition is diagnosed, we should be advised. After a period of illness, hospitalization, or large weight change, the fit of dentures may deteriorate and an extra recall appointment should be made.

Our continuing care program for complete denture patients involves a yearly appointment. At this appointment, the mouth and oral structures are given a thorough check including an oral cancer screening; the fit and bite of the dentures are examined closely, and the dentures are given a thorough cleansing in our industrial size ultrasonic cleaner. Any repairs or adjustments required will be carried out. We encourage you to take advantage of this program as an investment against future problems.

HOME RELINES

Materials can be purchased “over the counter” to place inside dentures to fill the space if they become loose. You should not use these materials. When they are used to line a denture, they can change the biting relationship of the teeth and this may place destructive forces on the gum and bone. When necessary, a professional reline should be done. This is hygienic, long lasting, and done with precautions to maintain the same biting relationship.

If any of the information in this document is not completely clear, please let us clarify for you. Good luck, and enjoy your new self-confidence!

Recipe for hot salt-water mouthwashes:

Place a teaspoonful of salt into a cup or glass of hot (but not boiling) water.
Stir and take mouthful.
Tip the head so as to bathe the uncomfortable area for about 20 seconds.
Empty the mouth and repeat until the salt solution is used up.
Repeat 3 or 4 times per day until your appointment.

Please keep this document in a safe place for future reference.