



**SADA**

THE SOUTH AFRICAN  
DENTAL ASSOCIATION

*Patient Education  
Information  
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**Bridges**

## Bridging the gap

An empty space, or gap, in your smile may affect your chewing and speaking abilities—and your self-confidence. If you're missing one or more teeth, your dentist may recommend a fixed bridge as a treatment option.

### What is a bridge?

A fixed bridge is a dental appliance that replaces one or more missing teeth—thus “bridging” the space between the two adjacent natural teeth or implants. Bridges are made from gold, alloys, porcelain, or a combination of these materials.

A traditional fixed bridge consists of a false tooth or teeth fused between two crowns, or caps, that are cemented on the surrounding, or abutment, teeth.

An implant bridge is fastened to two or more implants that are submerged in the bone tissue.

Bridges are sometimes called “fixed partial dentures.” However, unlike removable partial dentures, bridges cannot be removed by the patient.

### Why should I get a bridge?

If you are missing any teeth, the resulting space could cause speech or chewing problems.

Missing teeth also can cause your remaining teeth to move out of position by tilting towards the gap. This repositioning can make you more susceptible to tooth decay and gum disease, which can cause further tooth loss.

A fixed bridge can replace those missing teeth, thereby correcting your bite, and improving your chewing and speech abilities. A bridge also can help to maintain the natural shape of your face.

### What is the total treatment time?

There are several steps required and several dental visits needed in order for your dentist to create a bridge that meets both your functional and aesthetic needs.

The total treatment time for a bridge is usually two to four weeks, depending on the type of bridge you receive.

### How do I care for a bridge?

The success of a bridge depends on its foundation—the abutment teeth or implants—so it's vital for patients with bridges to maintain their oral health. If you have a bridge, it's more important than ever to brush for two minutes, twice a day and to see your dentist every six months.

Your dentist also might recommend that you use floss threaders to reach the spaces under the bridge as well as between the bridge and the adjacent teeth and gums. With proper care, your fixed bridge should last as long as eight to 10 years, or even longer.

To learn more about bridges and to determine if a bridge is right for you, talk to your SADA general dentist today.

### What are the alternatives?

There are other treatments that can be used to replace missing teeth; these include attachments for dentures and dental implants.

A dental implant is a small titanium threaded screw called a “fixture” that serves as the replacement for the root portion of one or more missing natural teeth.

The Implant can be placed in the upper or lower jaw. An implant will bond (Osseo integrate) with the bone over time and serve as an anchor for the replacement tooth.

With traditional bridges, two teeth adjacent to a missing tooth must be shaved down to anchor a bridge.

Dental implants can eliminate the need to modify healthy teeth. There are no loose dentures to worry about. The implant does not need to come in and out.

The implant is stable and comfortable. Adjustment is rarely needed after installation. Normally, it will serve its owner for life. Implant supported teeth look, feel and function very like natural teeth. This means you can eat and drink whatever you like.

### Speak to your SADA dentist for further information.