

# Aging and Dentures

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### As We Age: Dentures and Implants

#### Return to Wellness

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Dental problems that come with aging can sometimes cause teeth to become loose or fall out. If you have lost teeth, your dentist can replace them in one of two ways.

One option is dentures, sometimes called false teeth. Dentures are inserted into your mouth and held in place against the gums with an adhesive. At night, you can remove dentures and clean them by soaking them in water or a denture-cleansing liquid. This keeps food from staining your dentures and also prevents bad breath and swollen gums. Be sure to brush dentures once a day with denture-care toothpaste.

At first, your dentures may feel odd or uncomfortable, especially during meals. It may take a week or two to learn how to eat comfortably with them. Start with soft foods that don't stick to teeth, take small bites and chew slowly on both sides of your mouth. This can help you become more comfortable. A dentist will check your new dentures during the first few weeks to be sure that they fit, and adjust them if necessary.

Unlike dentures, dental implants are a way to replace missing teeth permanently. They stay in your mouth at all times, like normal teeth, and don't have to be held in place with adhesive.

An implant is a kind of anchor shaped like a small cylinder. It is set into your jawbone to hold an artificial tooth, called a crown. A dentist surgically sets the implant into the bone, then covers it with the gum tissue. Three to six months later, after the implant and the bone have fused, the dentist inserts a small post into the implant to hold the crown. Once the gum heals around the post, the crown is then attached to the post.

A dentist may suggest implants if your jawbone and gums are strong enough to support them. You must also be in good enough health to have implant surgery. You must also be committed to taking care of your teeth and gums and to seeing the dentist regularly. Not all insurance plans cover dental implants and they can be expensive. If you are considering implants, check your insurance coverage carefully.

## External Sources

American Dental Association. Dental implants. Accessed January 8, 2007.

American Dental Association. Dental Implants, an option for replacing missing teeth. Accessed January 8, 2007.

National Institutes on Aging. Taking care of your teeth and mouth. Accessed January 8, 2007.