

## Getting Used to New Dentures - What to Expect

**«Patient - Title» «Patient - Forename» «Patient - Surname»**

With today's techniques and materials dentures can be made to look, feel and function better than ever. However, artificial teeth are still not a substitute for healthy, natural teeth and cannot perform to the same degree as natural teeth. If you have unfortunately lost some or all of your teeth, then a partial or full denture enables you to maintain a pleasing appearance, and satisfactorily chew your food. Patience and learning are required. Some people catch on quickly, whereas others need more time. At first you will be feeling the new shapes in your mouth, with your lips, cheeks and tongue. Your speech may be altered and eating with your new dentures may be a problem.

New things are always strange. You will soon become accustomed to your new dentures which may now seem awkward. Have confidence in your appearance and smile. Any involuntary action such as coughing, yawning and sneezing will tend to unseat dentures.

### **SPEAKING**

Speaking may seem strange or even difficult at first. This is because your tongue has to learn where the teeth are. It is a good idea to read aloud to yourself for short periods during the first few days. Take occasional sips of water from a glass, as reading aloud makes your mouth feel dry. There is no need to be embarrassed about speaking; other people are much less aware of the awkwardness than you are. This is because your own voice never sounds the same to other people as it does to you. When you hear yourself speak most of the sound reaches your ears by means of vibrations in the bones of the jaw and

skull, this varies from the sound that travels through the air in the ordinary way. Therefore any small changes become much more noticeable to the speaker than to anyone else.

## **SORENESS**

You may find that your mouth may become sore when you are wearing the dentures. This is because new denture will settle into the tissue allowing your gums to reshape themselves to the shape of the new dentures. This process generally takes seven to fourteen days. When necessary an appointment will be given for inspection so that all the necessary adjustments can be made. Even if your mouth becomes sore, please be sure to wear your dentures for the whole of the day before your appointment, otherwise it may be difficult to tell where the pressure spot is. At first you may also find that you bite your cheeks or tongue, but this usually corrects itself after a short time when the muscles have adjusted themselves to the new support. Depending on the amount and rate of change occurring in the mouth an individual may require up to four adjustment appointments and up to one month to adapt to new dentures.

## **TASTE**

Patients frequently report that the sense of taste is affected when they first wear dentures. They sometimes think that this is caused by the palate being covered by the dentures. In fact taste buds are only present on the tongue and not in the palate. There are two reasons why food seems to lose some of its taste. First, the feeling of the food being squashed against the palate is lost. Second, although the taste buds are working quite normally the message they send to the brain is interrupted by the very large number of other messages from the sensory nerves in the mouth, telling the brain that a strange new object is in the mouth. As you become more accustomed to your dentures your brain pays less attention to these message and more to the messages form the taste buds. When this happens, food regains its taste.

## **SALIVA**

Because an artificial denture is a new object in the mouth you may at first develop an excessive flow of saliva. This reaction is perfectly natural and after a while it will reduce as you become accustomed to the dentures. The best way to overcome this temporary discomfort is to persevere in wearing the dentures. The use of sugar-free sweets or gum helps. In any case, if you bear in mind that a flow of saliva has always been going on unnoticed in your mouth before you started to use your dentures, you will quickly realise that it is quite a normal condition. The dentures also require a certain amount of saliva to work properly. A dry mouth is a common side-effect of many prescribed medications. This may cause the

dentures to feel loose and occasionally sore as well. You may like to try a saliva substitute should this condition exist.

## **EATING**

When you begin eating with your new dentures, it is important to start slowly. Eating may present difficulties; in fact it is the most difficult part in mastering new dentures. You must not be discouraged if you experience a few failures at first, natural teeth are firmly fixed in bone while artificial dentures only rest on the gums. When chewing on one side you may notice a tendency for the dentures to tip and loosen on the opposite side. Attempt to chew food on both sides with the teeth. This will help prevent tipping of your dentures. Provided that you are patient and spend the necessary time practising, you will learn to control the dentures automatically by using the muscles of mastication in your mouth.

All the muscles must learn what they should and should not do. With some new dentures it may have been necessary to increase the height of your upper and lower teeth so as to have them contact sooner. With a change such as this you will have to develop new chewing habits simply because you will be chewing your food at a different position than that of your old dentures. Start with food which doesn't need a lot of hard chewing. Also take smaller mouthfuls and chew slowly and evenly. At first do not bite off food with your front teeth; you will learn to do that later. Cut the food into smaller pieces that can easily be put into your mouth. As you begin to become more skilled at using your dentures, you will be able to try harder and tougher foods and eventually you will be able to use your front teeth for biting. Remember, with your natural teeth you bite and pulled but with dentures you bite and push. You may also have difficulty with very thin foods such as lettuce and the skins of apples or tomatoes. You will find apples easy to eat if you first peel them and cut them into slices or quarters.

## **BURNING**

Occasionally patients will complain of a burning sensation in the roof of the mouth. This appears to be much more common with women. Sometimes the burning sensation appears shortly after the delivery of the dentures, or sometimes it may be weeks before this problem occurs. Most patients report that it disappears when the dentures are removed from the mouth. There is no question of the discomfort that this condition creates. While the burning sensation undoubtedly has been triggered by the dentures, it is thought that it involves a nerve condition beyond the control of any dentist. As yet, no specific cure is known. Observations indicate that it may continue for a few months or as long as two years and then disappear. Consulting a GP is indicated.

## **LOWER DENTURES**

Lower dentures always take more practice to learn how to use them efficiently than upper dentures. With all lower dentures there is a tendency at first for the tongue and lower jaw muscles to displace it. Develop the habit of resting your tongue in the floor of your mouth so that the tip just touches the lower front teeth. This will help to keep the lower denture in place, particularly when you open your mouth widely. If you practise this positioning with your new dentures, correct placement of the tongue will become automatic in a short time.

**Dental Implants** are an ideal solution to problematic dentures. Speak to us to find out more!

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DENTURE CLEANING**

### **Acrylic resin denture**

- Rinse denture after every meal and remove debris by brushing with a soft brush, soap and cold water.
- Soak denture in a cold soaking solution (Dentural or Steradent) for 20 minutes in the evening.
- Rinse thoroughly with cold water and soak in cold water overnight.

### **Metal and acrylic resin**

- Rinse denture after every meal and remove debris by brushing with a soft brush, soap and cold water.
- Soak denture in a cold alkaline peroxide solution (e.g. Steradent) for 15 minutes or a cold alkaline hypochlorite solution (e.g. Dentural) for 10 minutes in the evening.
- Rinse denture thoroughly with cold water and soak in cold water overnight.
- Do not use acid cleansers (e.g. Denclen)

### **Soft linings**

- Rinse denture after every meal with cold water.
- Soak denture in a cold alkaline hypochlorite solution (e.g. Dentural or Milton) for 20 minutes.
- Rinse denture thoroughly with cold water.
- Do not use alkaline peroxide cleansers. (e.g. Steradent)

