

Post-Operative Instructions: Dentures

YOU CAN SMILE AGAIN

You are about to join the millions of people in this country who wear dentures. While you may have some anxiety and worry, there really are no major problems that you are likely to encounter. There will be some minor annoyances and adjustments, but your new dentures can provide you with a healthier mouth and a better appearance.

Your new teeth will be as lifelike as modern dentistry knows how to make them. The teeth used have been selected to match the shape, color, and size of your natural teeth. Occasionally, some changes are made to help improve your appearance. Incidentally, you shouldn't look forward to having very white teeth. The goal is a natural look, and few people have natural teeth that are sparkling white.

GETTING USED TO DENTURES

When your new dentures are in place, your first impression will be that you have quite a mouthful. You may feel that your face looks "full," and the teeth may actually seem to be longer than they should be. Your lips might seem out of place, and your tongue will probably feel crowded. In addition, your salivary glands will seem to be working overtime, and you'll notice the increased saliva.

You'll find that your mouth muscles are good at adapting, and they will adjust to the new surroundings. You'll quickly learn the trick of controlling your dentures.

BE PATIENT

There are no lessons or books; you must simply wear your dentures constantly in order to master them. The more you want to learn, the faster and easier it will be. With daily practice, you will soon feel comfortable with your new dentures.

PRACTICE TALKING

Some patients find it difficult to speak clearly and distinctly. Often, they have a tendency to lisp because of the dentures having altered the shape of the mouth. As soon as your tongue, lips, and cheeks become accustomed, speech returns to normal. Practice talking in front of a mirror or simply reading aloud to yourself for a few minutes each day until you feel comfortable.

LEARNING TO EAT

You should be able to eat most of your normal diet within a few weeks. In the beginning, though, start with soft food that's easy to chew, such as chopped meat and tender vegetables. Take small bites and chew gently and thoroughly. Be sure you don't get into the habit of chewing on only one side of the mouth. Begin by placing half of each mouthful on one side and the other half on the other side. You'll distribute the pressure more evenly this way, and it helps you learn more easily.

Although hard foods, such as apples or corn on the cob, may pose a bit more of a challenge, there is something you can do to help. When you bite with natural teeth, you have a tendency to pull forward. With your dentures, develop the habit of pushing back a little as you bite, especially with something like corn on the cob. This helps produce the leverage needed to keep your dentures in place.

SLEEPING WITH DENTURES

Many people wear their dentures all the time; there are no real rules. However, we strongly suggest you take them out at night, as this will allow good blood flow and help to keep your tissues healthy. You will find you adjust to what is best for you rather quickly.

SORE SPOTS

Some discomfort is to be expected until your gums grow accustomed to their new task. If a sore spot develops, contact your dentist.