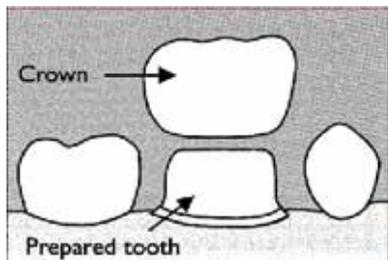# So You Need A Crown

What Is A Crown?

A crown is a hollow shell that covers or caps a specially prepared tooth. Think of it as having the damaged natural covering of your tooth replaced with a new synthetic covering.
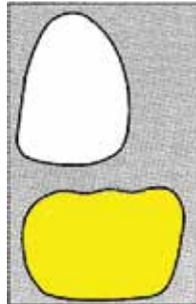
What Is A Crown Made Of?

Crowns for front teeth are usually made of porcelain or porcelain bonded to a metal backing. The same materials can be used for back teeth. However, metals such as gold can be used for back teeth when appearance is not important. They tend to fit better and last longer.

What Does A Crown Do?

It restores the shape and size of a tooth strengthening it in the process. In the case of a heavily filled or weakened tooth, it holds it together just like an iron band around a wooden barrel. A crown will reinforce your tooth to make sure it can tolerate chewing forces. This way your tooth will provide you with many years of service. Without a crown your tooth will break and may need to be extracted. Chewing difficulties will then begin.
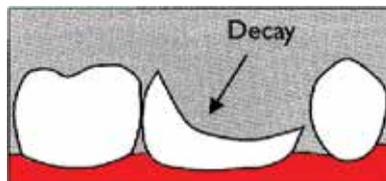
When the front of the crown is tooth coloured it restores the aesthetics of the tooth. This improves the patient's appearance, smile and self-esteem. Particularly if the old tooth was discoloured and unsightly. By using an experienced technician colours can be matched quite closely.
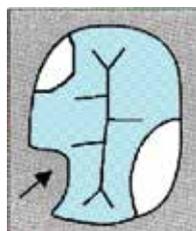

Why A Crown?

A crown may be required when an ordinary filling cannot be used. For example:
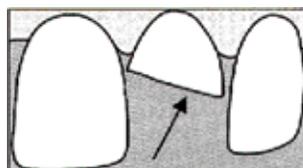
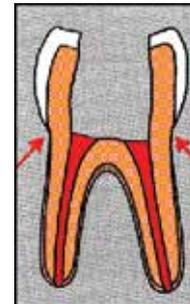When a tooth has been damaged by decay.

When a piece has broken off a heavily filled front or back tooth.

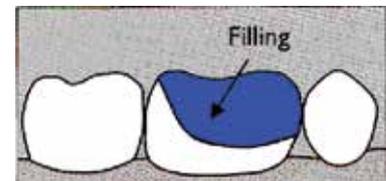When a tooth has been badly damaged in an accident.

After root canal treatment when the remaining tooth would be vulnerable to chipping or cracking.
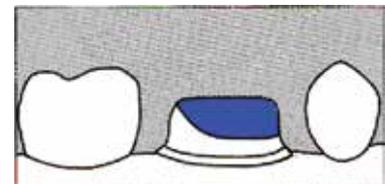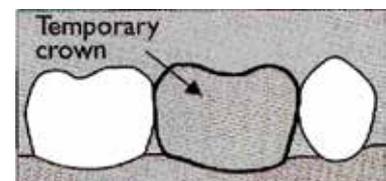

What Is Involved?

The missing part of the tooth may first have to be replaced with one of the normal filling materials.
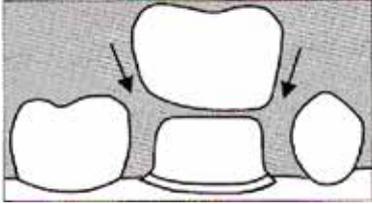

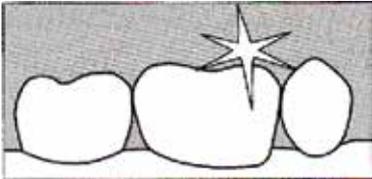The tooth is then reduced on the top and all sides until it looks like an elongated dome.

An impression and other records are taken and a temporary crown is fitted.

The crown is constructed and tried in for fit and, where appropriate, colour. (It is important that the crown fit the tooth very accurately.)

Finally the crown is cemented in place.

Are Crowns Suitable For Everyone?

No. Crowns for young people are usually deferred until the late teens. This is because the edge of the crown will eventually be hidden under the gum margin to disguise the join. At an early age, this gum level is not predictable and results are unreliable. Tooth bonding is usually used as a transitional measure until the patient is old enough to have a proper crown placed.

How Long Will It Last?

This is a difficult question because there are so many variables affecting the outcome. Just as it is impossible to say how long a car will last, one cannot predict the life span of a crown in the mouth of a particular individual. How long your crown lasts will depend on how well your dentist makes it, and more importantly, how well you look after it. On average a crown will last about 15 years.

If you keep it clean, and have regular checkups you should find it will long outlast ordinary restorations. It will look and feel good for many years. However, a crown will not prevent the tooth from dying. A nerve may appear healthy when tested prior to crown construction, but could die at any stage in the future. This does not mean the crown has failed. On most occasions the dead nerve can be treated through the existing crown.

The cost of crowns may seem high in the short term, they are sophisticated and time consuming to produce and all the materials involved are costly. However, they are very strong and if cared for well, are the longest lasting type of restoration possible, thus justifying the initial investment.

Tips For the Wise Consumer?

Keep your teeth meticulously plaque free. Clean teeth do not decay. To ensure the maximum life-span from your new crown/s practice the correct home care. Your dentist will show you how.