

## Dentures

What to expect and how to care for you new dentures.

### Limitations of Dentures

Dentures only function at about 20% of the chewing efficiency of natural teeth. Do not expect your dentures to function as your natural teeth once did. Learn to know the limitations of your dentures and adjust your living habits accordingly.

### You Are an Individual

You have new dentures which will fit and feel different than your teeth or the dentures you have been using in the past. As you are adjusting to your new dentures, remember that no two people are the same. Therefore, do not compare your progress in adjusting to the new dentures with another person. What is annoying and painful to some will not be true for others. Some people have an easier time adjusting because they have larger, stronger bone to support their dentures. Disregard comments of others who may say, “I never had a bit of trouble when I had my new dentures made”. Many people tend to forget the problems they had adjusting.

### Sore Areas with New Dentures

An appointment will be made for you 24 to 48 hours after the insertion of your new dentures. Sore areas **will** develop within this time period and it is important to find and adjust the cause of the sores. Do not attempt to adjust the dentures yourself because they can very easily be destroyed by a “do-it-yourself” adjustment. As you use your dentures, they will settle on the soft tissues of your mouth. This will necessitate additional adjustment appointments as the occurrence of new sores is certainly possible. If you find it necessary to remove your denture due to excessive soreness, reinsert the dentures 24 hours before your next adjustment appointment. This will make it possible for us to see the pressure areas on the tissues and pinpoint accurately where and how to adjust the dentures.

### Speaking with New Dentures

Learning to talk with your dentures in place requires practice, patience and perseverance. Reading aloud every day is a very helpful method of learning to pronounce words distinctly; practicing in front of the mirror is helpful as well. Practice those words or sounds that seem to give you the most difficulty. It takes time for the tongue to learn the different positions necessary to make good speech sounds with new dentures.

### Chewing with New Dentures

Learning to chew with new dentures will likely take as long as six to eight weeks to become comfortable and much longer to master. There will be foods that you will not be able to eat effectively ever again, such as corn on the cob. Patience is required to learn to eat with your new dentures. At first, limit your diet to soups and soft foods which are easy to cut into small pieces and chew. Gradually learn to eat foods that are more difficult for you to chew; eating in privacy at first will help curb frustrations. Take small bites, or cut foods that you might otherwise not think to eat with a knife and fork (such as hot dogs or pizza), chew slowly and methodically trying to overcome difficulties as they arise. Identify methods that work and repeat them, while also noting foods or methods that are challenging and keep working to master them.

If possible, learn to chew on both sides of the dentures at the same time with a piece of food on each side of your mouth at once, this helps stabilize the dentures as you chew. The lower denture is rarely as stable as the upper denture partially because the muscles of the cheeks, lips and tongue will tend to displace the lower denture as you chew and smile. Try to train these muscles to assist in keeping your dentures in place while functioning. When biting with your dentures, place the food between the teeth towards the corner of your mouth rather than between the front teeth. This will help reduce the amount of movement of the dentures on the ridges. If you have trouble keeping your lower denture in place during eating, it may be due to poor tongue posture. The tongue should touch the inner surface of the lower denture to help hold it down while eating.

### Increased Saliva with New Dentures

Do not be alarmed with the increased amounts of saliva in your mouth during the first few weeks of wearing your dentures. This condition will correct itself with time as you become accustomed to wearing dentures.

### Oral Hygiene with Dentures

Your dentures should be taken out of your mouth for at least eight of every twenty-four hours to allow the tissues to rest from the pressures placed on them by the dentures. Failure to allow the tissues to rest can result in chronic irritation to the tissues, the development of fungal infections and more rapid loss of bone leading to denture instability and a poor fit. This bone is desperately needed to provide support for the dentures in future years so it must be conserved. It is important to clean your dentures under running water and rinse your mouth out after every time you eat. Soak your dentures overnight in water, using a denture cleaning tab twice a week in the cup of water. Keep dentures safe from cats and dogs, they are a favorite chew toy and can be easily ruined in a very short time as such. Brush your dentures every morning with a denture brush and rinse with running water. Never use toothpaste on your dentures, the abrasive material in the toothpaste can scratch the acrylic of your denture leading to increased bacterial adhesion and odors. The tissues of the mouth and tongue should be brushed daily with a soft bristle tooth brush. This provides stimulation for increased circulation and removes debris that could cause irritation and offensive odors.

### Longevity of Dentures

The assumption that dentures will last a lifetime is incorrect. You can expect to get between 5 and 10 years of life out of your dentures with good maintenance and relines when necessary. Take into consideration that both the denture and tissues will change over time. It is suggested that your mouth be examined and the fit of your dentures be evaluated by a dentist at least once every year. Shrinkage or resorption of your ridges is a normal occurrence. This results in loosening of your dentures and perhaps a change in facial appearance due to settling of the dentures on the ridges. Changes in your ridges are beyond our control and when it becomes necessary to refit or replace your dentures to correct for this change, an additional fee will be charged. Never try to repair or adjust your denture yourself. This could be destructive to the tissue and underlying bone on which the denture rests and we cannot be responsible for repairing any denture you have manipulated.

### Resources for the New Denture Wearer

<http://www.dentureliving.com/NewDentures>

<http://www.mypolicare.com>

<http://denturesanewsmile.ning.com>

<http://www.ada.org> (click on "Public Resources" and scroll down the next page to "Oral Health Topics")

<http://www.knowyourteeth.com>