



Ask Dr. Grant



DR GRANT IS A RENOWNED COSMETIC DENTIST TREATING PATIENTS BOTH NATIONALLY AND INTERNATIONALLY, THE ONLY COSMETIC DENTIST IN THE REGION GRANTED PRACTISING PRIVILEGES AT NUFFIELD HOSPITAL, EXETER

Dental bridges – what's the story?

What are they?

A dental bridge replaces a missing tooth or teeth by using the teeth either side of the gap as anchors. Patients lose teeth for a variety of reasons including decay, gum disease and trauma.

Why have one?

Bridges can, in certain cases, be a really good alternative to implants or dentures. For example, if the teeth either side of the gap are badly broken down or weakened by decay or large fillings, a bridge not only fills the gap but also treats the teeth either side in the process.

Any choices?

They can either be made of porcelain bonded to metal or metal-free which is generally considered more cosmetically pleasing as metal can show through porcelain over time. There are also so-called 'sticky bridges' which, as their name suggests, are stuck onto teeth, thereby reducing the need to remove enamel.

What about treatment?

A full examination, including x-rays, is needed to assess the health of the teeth either side of the gap. Following a local anaesthetic, the teeth are drilled down and an impression is taken. Approximately 10 days later, the bridge

can be fitted. Between the preparation and final restoration, a temporary bridge can be placed for comfort and cosmetics.

How long do they last?

It depends on how well you look after them, and also on the type of bridge. The generally quoted average is 10 years for 'normal' bridges and seven years for 'sticky bridges'. However, there was an article in the *British Dental Journal* describing a bridge lasting 40 years!

Any alternatives?

Bridges are not the first choice if the teeth either side of the gap are completely healthy, as is usually the case after trauma. Dentists are reluctant to remove enamel from healthy teeth simply to fit a bridge. The main alternative is dental implants, as discussed in *Exeter Living* issue 107.

A denture is another alternative, but I rarely provide these in my practice.

Any downsides?

Extensive, irreversible tooth removal either side of the gap, but remember – it's usually the damage to these teeth that dictates the choice of a bridge in the first place. Trauma to any tooth, including removing the tooth surface to fit a bridge, may cause the tooth nerve to die, necessitating a subsequent root treatment, although this can be performed through the bridge.

Costs?

Between £300 and £1,000 per unit on average, but it entirely depends on the number of teeth in the bridge, for example a single gap with two teeth holding the bridge either side is considered a three-unit bridge. So when you see 'prices from' for bridges, find out how many teeth are involved. As always, go for trust and experience, though, not simply cost. **EL**

**“THE ONLY BAD
THING ABOUT
BURNING YOUR
BRIDGES BEHIND
YOU IS THAT THE
WORLD IS ROUND”**

**Dr Grant BDS BSc (Hons)
Cosmetic Dentist
The Whyte House
89 Fore Street,
Topsham
EX3 0HQ
tel: 01392 877494
www.thewhytehouse.com**