

The Care of Removable Dentures

In this article, we review the current opinions on some of the fundamental topics of everyday denture care and usage.

Studies performed during chewing, demonstrated that denture adhesives even improve the retention and stability of well-fitting dentures. Patient confidence is significantly enhanced with adhesive usage. Concerns about the potential for irritation and bone resorption resulting from the use of denture adhesives were not observed more frequently among denture adhesive users. Consequently, it is unlikely that hard tissue damage would result from the presence of denture adhesive. If anything, the properties off the adhesive will act to dampen and distribute potentially damaging forces applied to your denture. Adhesive usage can improve hold, but it is not meant for long-term substitution for poor fitting dentures.

Daily denture cleaning is essential for your health and because denture plaque can contribute to stomatitis, denture odor and is even implicated in systematic diseases. Luckily, there are many safe cleaning options available. Brushing your dentures with toothpaste and toothbrush is a familiar practice for many patients. With traditional tooth brushing, stain and plaque is removed with mechanical “scrubbing action”. For patients with limitations on manual dexterity, or for those who lack stamina to vigorously brush, a thorough cleaning may not be achieved. The ingredients in toothpaste can roughen and wear away the denture surface with continued use. To overcome those potential problems, self-foaming denture cleaning liquids have been introduced. Soaking tablets also clean and sanitize through a combination of surfactants, oxidizers and effervescent agents. It provides higher levels of cleaning ingredients than toothpaste, and it provides a superior cleaning and sanitation. By relying on chemical action, cleaning and refreshing can be achieved within 3 minutes of immersion. Regular usage of commercial products will be sufficient to maintain denture cleanliness. Certain conditions may warrant more aggressive cleaning approaches. Extensive microbial infestation can be reduced with a 1:10 dilution of household bleach in water. Calculus deposits may be reduced with a teaspoon of chelating dishwasher detergent (Calgon) to one cup diluted bleach. In all cases, compatibility of these solutions with the denture resins and alloys should always be monitored.

Overnight wearing of dentures may result in the development of denture stomatitis, a chronic inflammation which is aggravated by poor fit, patient reaction to allergens and more importantly, patient exposure to bacteria retained on the denture. Microbial infestation had been a common cause of denture

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stomatitis. With continuous wear, the growth of organisms is promoted by warm, moist, nutrient-rich environment for the mouth. Under the denture, in regions that are oxygen depleted, the growth of certain pathogenic organisms may also be enhanced. The build-up of microorganisms creates a toxic environment for mucosal tissues. Patients should leave their dentures out for at least 6-8 hours a day. Loss of bone is an additional concern which overnight wearing of dentures accelerates. Studies of radiographs show patients who wear dentures at night lost more bone over five years than those who did not wear dentures at night. Studies focused on the overnight wearing of dentures found a significantly larger decrease in the height of the mandible and a 25% greater loss of bone was observed.

Despite these factors there are some patients that may benefit from wearing dentures overnight. Patients that clench their teeth can develop significant pain in their muscles. In such cases we recommend taking your dentures out 4-6 hours during the day when clenching can be controlled. Additionally, we recommend continuous usage during the initial adjustments following the insertion of new dentures.

We recommend you store your dentures in a glass of water overnight. This helps reduce the distortion and dimensional changes. Despite these concerns, it may still be beneficial to **periodically** permit dentures to air-dry overnight for at least 8 hours to eliminate fungal surface contamination. When used in conjunction with the antifungal activities of typical commercial denture cleansing tablets, it is possible to control fungal activities with periodic drying.

