

You have a missing tooth and want to replace it. Here are your options:

1. **Do nothing.**
 - a. Advantages – none
 - b. Disadvantages – Nearby teeth may tilt into the vacant space opening up gaps in the other teeth leading to food impaction and possible gum disease. Opposing teeth may super-erupt into the vacated space until they encounter something to stop them. You have a gap in your smile. The bone in the area may continue to melt away.
2. **Removable Partial Denture to replace the missing tooth/teeth**
 - a. Advantages – Teeth adjacent to, or opposing missing tooth/teeth don't shift. Occlusion (chewing ability) is preserved. No gaps in your smile. Next to doing nothing, it's the least expensive option.
 - b. Disadvantages – Framework covers or clings to other structures in your mouth and can lead to decay or loosening and loss of supporting teeth. Framework can be a food trap requiring cleaning every time you eat something. Bone under partial bases will continue to melt away over time. Chewing efficiency may be degraded if partial is largely gum supported. There may be esthetic issues if frame or clasps are visible. Can be easily lost or misplaced. If you have a dog you must watch out that it doesn't get a hold of your appliance (dogs love to chew dentures and partials).
3. **Fixed Bridge**
 - a. Advantages – No loss of chewing capability. Highly esthetic (very life-like). Easy to care for.
 - b. Disadvantages – Must have a suitable support tooth on either side of the space. Must cut down teeth on either side of the space. The load of the missing tooth is shared by adjacent teeth. More expensive (you are paying for three or more crowns). If placed too soon after loss of tooth in the space, bone may shrink more during healing and leave a gap under the bridge (must wait for bone healing 4 to 6 months)
4. **Implant supported crown (or bridge)**
 - a. Advantages – This is the only option that preserves the bone where the tooth was. It is self-supporting and needs no help from other teeth to bear the load of chewing. Very life-like.
 - b. Disadvantages – Placement of the implant requires waiting until the bone grows around it before a crown can be placed on it (integration, typically 4 to 6 months). May require a bone graft before or during placement. Most expensive option but most durable.