

Crowning Moment

Dental restorations restore the function, integrity, and morphology of missing tooth structure, which can be caused by caries or external trauma, such as chipping or cracking a tooth. Fabrication of a crown (a type of dental restoration) usually requires two dental visits. The first visit involves an examination of the tooth to determine how it should be restored and preparation of the tooth for the restoration; this visit may include a core build-up (sometimes requiring a post), fabrication of a temporary crown, and making an impression to be sent to the laboratory. The second visit usually involves delivery of the final restoration, which has been fabricated in the laboratory. In some offices that have access to specialized equipment, the dentist may be able to perform the entire crown procedure in the same day.

What is a crown?

A crown is a restoration that covers (or “caps”) a tooth to restore it to its normal shape and size, which can strengthen and improve the appearance of the tooth. Crowns are necessary when a tooth has been damaged significantly and cannot be adequately restored with a filling. A crown can protect a weak tooth from fracturing; it also can prevent a cracked tooth from further damage.

Crowns can cover discolored or misshapen teeth for more aesthetically pleasing smiles.

What is a post and core build-up?

The dentist may use a filling material to restore a more ideal shape for supporting a crown (core build-up) when a tooth is severely decayed or fractured and lacks sufficient tooth structure. In some cases, a dentist will first perform a root canal, a procedure in which pulp is cleared out of the tooth and the canal is sealed with a special material. After the root canal, the dentist may place a post in the open canal and secure it with dental filling to “build up” the structure of the tooth. Once the material has hardened, the tooth can be prepared for a crown.

Will a crown look natural?

It can, depending on the type of crown you elect to have made. A crown can be fabricated from porcelain, from gold, or from a combination of porcelain and metal. A crown can look just like a natural tooth when it is made with porcelain coverage. Numerous factors are considered when determining the crown material that is best for your particular tooth, including the color, bite, shape, space, and location of the tooth in your mouth.



How should I care for my teeth after I receive a crown?

To prevent damaging or fracturing the crown, avoid chewing extremely hard foods and ice. You also should avoid grinding or clenching your teeth. In addition to brushing twice a day and visiting your dentist regularly, cleaning between your teeth is essential if you have crowns. Use floss or interdental cleaners (specially shaped brushes and sticks) to remove plaque from the crown area where the gum meets the tooth. This process helps to

prevent both dental decay and gum disease.

What do I do if I'm a still confused about these procedures?

If you are still unclear about the process of placing a crown or a post and core build-up, speak to your dentist. Your dentist can walk you through the steps of the procedures and address any questions or concerns you may have. It is important to have these types of conversations with your dentist so that your journey to an improved smile doesn't start—or end—with a frown.