

When gums recede...

As we age, our gums tend to recede. The saying "long in the tooth" originated from the fact that teeth appear longer as the gums pull away from them. The teeth are actually the same size they have always been, but more of the roots are exposed and they appear longer. However, receding gums don't just result in aesthetic changes; teeth will also be more sensitive to very hot or cold foods, causing discomfort. Foods will stick more easily around the gums and between teeth as well, so hygiene will become more difficult and increase in importance.

There are several things that can contribute to receding gums. Heredity and the alignment of the teeth may play a role. Problems with the muscles attached to the gingiva may also be a culprit. However, there are other contributing factors that can have an effect. For instance, periodontal disease and brushing too hard with a hard- or medium-hard-bristled toothbrush can both cause gums to recede even further.

Receding gums can be treated by a surgical procedure that repositions the gingiva. This will reinforce the gum tissue, with the goal of preventing more recession. Preparation for this procedure may include root planing and scaling and other surgical intervention. There are also medications and other preparations that can help to lessen the sensitivity in this area.

You can help to slow root exposure due to gum recession by practicing the kind of oral hygiene that prevents periodontal disease and by seeing us regularly for cleanings and checkups. Brushing gently, but thoroughly, with a soft brush, avoiding abrasive toothpastes, and flossing daily are all smart moves. Talk to us about other things that can be done to keep your gums from receding and your smile looking youthful and bright.



The aesthetics of a crown and bridge

The combination of a crown and bridge can be used to save teeth and hold them in place for a more pleasing appearance and retained function. The crown-and-bridge treatment offers a number of benefits to patients who are missing teeth or who are in danger of losing a tooth. For instance, we can retain your natural bite for comfortable eating and to reduce stress from opposing teeth. The teeth around the area will not shift as they might if the tooth were simply pulled. Although extra care will be needed, further decay in the area can usually be avoided. You will retain your natural smile and speaking function.

A crown, also called a cap, covers the visible portion of a tooth. Often, the tooth has undergone a root canal procedure. A crown can strengthen a tooth, but it is also used to support the remaining structure of a severely decayed or broken tooth.

Crowns can be color-matched to your other teeth, and they can be made to be compatible with the natural bite and function.

A bridge holds teeth in place when they have loosened

and/or replaces missing teeth in order to restore form and function. The teeth on either side of the bridge often need crowns so they can help provide the anchors. Materials used for crowns and bridges include metals fused to porcelain, which form a strong hold that appears natural.

Caring for a crown and bridge means practicing good oral hygiene—flossing daily, or using threaders to get under the bridge, and brushing after each meal. The health of the gums and surrounding teeth is especially important. Avoid chewing hard foods, such as hard pretzels, hard candies, and ice cubes. Sticky foods, such as caramel and gum, should be avoided, too.

In addition to the benefits mentioned above, a bridge helps to retain the natural shape of your mouth and cheeks so that you continue to look like yourself. Crowns and bridges work together beautifully to combine aesthetics and function, and restore an area that is weak or where a tooth has been lost so that you can continue to put your best smile forward.