

Important Information: Crown Build-ups (restorations under crowns)

General Information

A crown is necessary to restore a tooth when there is not enough remaining tooth structure to surround a filling. Part of the process of doing a crown often involves the removal of any decay and/or existing filling material and the placement of a material that will serve as the foundation for the crown. This material is known as a crown build-up or a restoration under crown. There are several different materials that can be used for this purpose, but many of the most common materials are resins that bond with the natural tooth structure that remains.

Sometimes this crown build-up is done at the same time as the tooth is shaped for the crown. At other times, preparation of the tooth for the crown is postponed, and only the crown build-up is placed. It is allowed to serve as a short-term restoration. The reasons your doctor may decide to place the crown build-up and wait are:

1. The tooth has deep decay or a deep filling that is near the pulp (nerve) of the tooth. Prior to preparing the tooth for a crown, your doctor wants to stabilize and seal the tooth and allow some time to determine if the pulp will remain healthy or return to a healthy state. If you are experiencing mild sensitivity or discomfort with the tooth this is a common approach. Once the crown build-up is placed and any sensitivity or discomfort subsides, your doctor can proceed with the crown preparation with a better assurance that the pulp is healthy. If your symptoms persist or worsen after placement of the crown build-up, this usually means root canal treatment will be necessary prior to placing a crown. In either case, placement of the crown build-up seals and stabilizes the tooth for the short term.
2. You have several teeth with large areas of decay that will need fillings and/or crowns, and your doctor wants to stabilize as many of them as quickly as possible to prevent further deterioration.
3. You have a tooth that has had a root canal and needs a crown. The crown build-up serves as a temporary filling and the foundation for the crown.
4. You have active periodontal (gum) disease or other dental conditions that require treatment prior to the placement of any crowns.
5. You need a large amount of treatment and express financial or insurance limitations that require you to spread your treatment over a longer period of time. Your doctor may place crown build-ups in some or all of the teeth needing crowns and then complete the crowns as finances or insurance permit. However, crown build-ups are not meant to be long term restorations and will deteriorate within a few months if not covered by a crown. Doing this will only allow you to delay the placement of a needed crown for a few months.

Limitations

As mentioned above, crown build-ups are not meant to be final restorations. They deteriorate quickly if not covered by a crown. Follow your dentist's advice regarding the best time to proceed with the crown. Avoid chewing hard foods on teeth with crown build-ups until the crown is placed over them.

Notify Your Dentist If You Notice Any Of The Following:

1. The tooth with the new crown build-up seems to touch first before your other teeth come together.
2. The tooth becomes sore after you chew your food.
3. The tooth aches and over the counter pain medications like Tylenol or Advil will not relieve the ache.

Instructions For After Your Appointment and For the Long Term:

1. If you received a local anesthetic, do not attempt to chew or drink anything until the numbness wears off. While numb, it is very easy to bite or burn your tongue, cheek or lip without knowing you are doing it.
2. If you received a local anesthetic, you may have some soreness in the area of the injection. This soreness will subside over a few days. Warm salt water rinses will sooth the area.
3. Extra care should be taken to brush and clean the build-up because decay is more likely to occur at the junction of the tooth and the build-up.
4. You may notice the tooth with the new build-up is sensitive to heat and/or cold. This temperature sensitivity should decrease over the next few weeks. Avoid extremely hot or cold foods and liquids during this period.
5. Occasionally, teeth that have new build-ups will ache for the first few days after the build-up is placed. Over the counter pain medications will normally relieve any discomfort you experience while the tooth is returning to normal. Unless you have restrictions on their use, those medications that have anti-inflammatory properties (Advil and aspirin are the most common) usually give the best results.
6. In some cases, if the nerve was unhealthy or significantly damaged prior to this treatment, the ache may not subside and may even get worse as time passes. This means that the nerve is dying and the tooth will require further treatment. You may experience spontaneous aching (aches without chewing or having anything in your mouth), lingering sensitive to cold and/or heat, and sensitivity to pressure when biting on the tooth. Contact your dentist if you experience any of these symptoms.
7. Exposed crown build-ups are fragile. Avoid chewing ice, hard candy, and other hard food on the tooth with the build-up.