

INDIRECT FILLINGS

When a tooth is too damaged to accept a filling but not damaged enough to require a crown, dental “onlays” and “inlays” present excellent options. These types of dental restorations, which are also referred to as “indirect fillings,” are used to repair teeth’s damaged chewing surfaces. In cases where there is no damage to the tooth’s cusps, an inlay will be placed between the cusps. If one or more cusps are fractured, an onlay will be used to restore the damaged cusps. Requiring the removal of more tooth material than a filling, but much less material than a crown, onlays and inlays are more durable than fillings and less expensive than crowns.

P.S. Dental inlays and onlays may be constructed of gold, tooth-colored [composite resin](#), or porcelain.

THE IMPORTANCE OF HEALTHY GUMS

Periodontal diseases primarily result from infections and inflammation of the gums and bone that surround the teeth. It is important to address early-stage gum disease, called “gingivitis,” before it progresses to more serious “periodontitis,” which threatens both tooth and bone loss. In fact, periodontal disease poses as much (if not more) of a danger to dental health among adults than tooth decay. According to a CDC report on the prevalence of periodontitis in the United States, nearly half (47.2%) of adults aged 30 years and older have some form of periodontal disease, and 70.1% of adults 65 years and older have gum disease. Neglecting this problem can lead to potential tooth loss that can be hazardous to overall health.

P.S. Periodontal disease is the most common cause of tooth loss in adults.

SORE JAWS

If your jaw joint is painful or it clicks or pops as you chew or yawn, you are likely experiencing symptoms of “temporomandibular joint” (TMJ) disorder. The temporomandibular joints on each side of the face connect the lower jaw (mandible) to the temporal bone, which contributes to the lower lateral walls of the skull. TMJ disorder is most often caused by misalignment of the teeth or jaw, [teeth grinding](#) or clenching, poor posture, [stress](#), [arthritis](#), and/or aggressive gum chewing. The dentist is in the best position to diagnose and treat TMJ disorder. Conservative treatments, such as wearing a custom mouth guard at night to prevent tooth grinding (bruxism), are generally tried first to correct the problem.

P.S. A soft “boil and bite” mouth guard that is sold over-the-counter will not stop tooth grinding that causes TMJ disorder because it does not provide enough resistance to jaw movement.

CAUGHT IN THE MIDDLE

When an extra (“supernumerary”) tooth develops in the mouth, it most often involves the appearance of an adult incisor called a “mesiodens” (or “middle tooth”), which appears between the upper central incisors (top front teeth). Only about one percent to three percent of the population is affected, and males are twice as likely to develop supernumerary teeth as females. In any case, the tendency to produce supernumerary teeth seems to be inherited. Owing to the fact that supernumerary teeth are unsightly and may cause damage to adjacent teeth and affect the permanent dentition, extraction is generally recommended. It is best to do so before age five, when the root of the mesiodens is not yet fully developed.

P.S. By scheduling regular checkups for young children, extra teeth, missing teeth, and other potential tooth problems can be detected early and treated with fewer complications.