

## Two Good Options for Temporarily Replacing a Teenager’s Missing Tooth

While anyone can lose a permanent tooth, the cause often varies by age group. Adults usually lose their teeth to disease, while those under twenty usually lose theirs to trauma.

For adults, a dental implant is usually the best way to replace a missing tooth. Teenagers and younger, on the other hand, must wait to get implants until their jaws fully develop. An implant placed on an immature jaw will eventually look and feel out of place.

For most, their jaws won’t reach full maturity until their early twenties. Even so, they still have a couple of good options for restoring their smiles in the meantime, albeit temporarily.

One is a *removable partial denture* or RPD, a device with the replacement prosthetic (false) tooth or teeth set in a gum-colored acrylic base. Of the various types of RPDs, most teenagers do well with a rigid but lightweight version called a “flipper,” so called because it can be flipped in and out of place with the tongue.

These RPDs are affordable, their fit easily adjusted, and they make cleaning the rest of the teeth easier. But they can break while biting down hard and—because they’re dentures—aren’t always well accepted among teenagers.

The other option is a *bonded bridge*. Unlike a traditional bridge secured with crowns cemented to natural teeth, a bonded bridge uses a strip of dental material affixed to the back of the prosthetic tooth with the ends of the strip extending outward horizontally. With the prosthetic tooth inserted into the empty space, these extended ends are bonded to the backs of the natural teeth on either side.

Though not as secure as a traditional bridge, a bonded bridge is more aesthetic and comfortable than an RPD. On the other hand, patients who have a deep bite or a teeth-grinding habit, both of which can generate abnormally high biting forces, run a higher risk of damaging the bridge. A bridge can also make hygiene tasks difficult and time-consuming, requiring a high degree of self-discipline from the patient.

Whichever you choose, both options can effectively replace a teenager’s missing tooth while waiting for dental implants. Although temporary, they can make the long wait time for a teenager more bearable.



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