

7 things you really must know before you buy a denture!

Top Tips From A Denture Expert

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S.Miles
The Denture Expert

It's vitally important that you ask all the right questions before you go ahead and have a new denture made, that's why I have put this guide together for you to so that you can be sure to ask all the right questions and get the answers that matter.

1. Who are you going to choose to provide your denture?

A dentist or a clinical dental technician?

Gone are the days when only a dentist could provide patients with new dentures, these days you can go directly to the dental technician who can make them as long as they are clinically qualified. There are some clear benefits to going directly to a clinical dental technician, the main one being you will have a denture made directly by a denture expert.

However, the dental technician must have clinical training and be working in a clinical environment with the correct indemnity in place. It's a sad fact that there are some unregistered dental technicians out there that will make dentures illegally on the side which could put you in harms way. To avoid any concerns you may have about whether a technician is working safely you can check out their registration online. Just go to the General Dental Council website www.gdc-uk.org and search either their

name or GDC number.

If you choose to have a dentist make your denture, be sure that they have a very good working relationship with their chosen technician, and ask if you could visit the technician who is going to make your denture for you. Most technicians would be delighted to meet the person they are making the denture for, and they will have a much better idea of how to make the denture after meeting you. Some technicians also offer shade taking and tooth mould matching for their dentist, so don't be afraid to ask!

2. Where is the denture going to be made?

Will your new denture be made locally or sent abroad?

If your new denture is going to be made locally, you will have access to some of the options as mentioned above, but there will be other benefits too, local technicians usually provide a free pickup and delivery service for the dentist which cuts down on time and eliminates the chance of dentures getting lost in the post. It's also worth noting here that a great many dentists now send their denture work abroad to countries like India and China where they can get them made a lot cheaper than they can in this country. My personal feelings on this are quite clear, we have strict regulation in this country with accountability and traceability of every denture. The GDC does not extend its powers of patient protection to other countries and so the dentist is responsible for the production even though they are not present or have any control over it.

Most clinical dental technicians will have their own dental laboratory at the same location as the clinic and if not it is usually very close to the clinic.

3. How much will the denture cost?

Is it better to have your denture made as cheaply as possible? Or is it worth spending a little more for high quality?

The price of dentures can vary widely and the main reason for this is not just quality but because of NHS pricing structures. An NHS denture should normally cost you about £200. This is very cheap when you consider the amount of work that goes in to making a denture and it's only possible when the dentures are made with budget materials and in the quickest possible way and with the lowest paid staff. Because of this low quality, you don't usually get a very nice denture and they tend not to last very long. A private denture will usually cost between £400 to £1000 depending on where it's made and what it's made with. A private denture will have more time spent on its construction and be made with higher quality materials.

4. What different type of dentures are available?

What is the right type of denture for you?

There are a lot of different types of denture available and the right type of denture for you will depend on many factors; how many natural teeth you have remaining, the shape, size and position of the remaining teeth, the shape and size of your jaws and gums, and many many more factors besides. The different types of denture are as follows:

Standard acrylic – usually used for temporary dentures and NHS dentures

Pourable Acrylic – quite often used with metal frame dentures because the metal frame work provides all the strength although many technicians are starting to use this as a quick and cheap method of making whole dentures. I'm not a big fan of pourable acrylic due to its poor longevity.

High impact acrylic – this is a very common type of acrylic used for private dentures, especially when provided by a dentist because it's much more durable than a standard acrylic and tends to last a lot longer. I usually use a high impact material with temporary dentures as its quite strong, easy to use and is still relatively inexpensive.

Metal frame – A metal frame can be a great solution to many problems associated with dentures because they can add a level of strength to a denture that cannot otherwise be achieved with acrylic alone. Other benefits include its small profile so it feels a lot smaller in the mouth. This can help with speech and feels more comfortable. Metal frames (chrome cobalt) are very good for patients with missing lower back teeth because of the small profile. You can expect to pay more for a metal fame but it is usually worth the extra investment. Metal frames are also essential for implant retained dentures.

Injection moulded – These are quite simply the best acrylics available. They cost much more to make due to the specialised equipment used, single use acrylic capsules and the extra time that goes in to making them. These dentures can look stunning and last much longer than other acrylics. The denser material means you will get less staining and a much smoother finish too.

Flexible plastic – a very similar situation to the injection moulded denture, very time consuming and a lot more difficult to produce but it has some great benefits for some people, particularly where teeth are at a difficult angle or where some bone recession has occurred. They can also be quite comfortable for some situations and can also be very small.

Implant retained/stabilised – I don't have enough good things to say about implant

retained dentures. I provide lots and lots of these from my surgery and my patients and I love them. Why? Because they just work! For anyone who has ever had a denture that moves when they talk, and food gets under them when they eat, an implant retained or stabilised denture can be life changing. When the dentures are finished, they just click in to place and stay there. The palates are reduced too because all the retention is from the implants themselves. Implant retained dentures are usually a minimum number of implants which are designed to keep the denture in place. Implant stabilised dentures have the optimum amount of implants to not only retain the dentures (stops them lifting or dropping) but to keep it fixed in place and be completely stable

Fixed arch implants - not usually referred to as a denture as these are more like crowns and bridges because they do not have a palate and cannot be removed by the patient. These are just the teeth section and are completely fixed in place. This is the closest we can get to replacing natural teeth, it's also one of the most expensive methods. All implants take a long time because they need to integrate with the bone, so expect the process to take a few months from start to finish.

5. How long should a denture last?

Are all dentures made equal?

This is a very difficult question to answer because there are so many factors to take in to consideration. What are the dentures made from, how were they made, what types of food are eaten, the way in which food is eaten, how the dentures are cleaned and with what, the changing conditions of the mouth, the list goes on and on. In my experience a denture lasts from one to twenty years. An NHS denture may only last a year or two even with perfect conditions, just because of the type of materials used. A good quality private denture should easily last ten years if the mouth conditions do not change, and here's the point, even the best denture will only last as long as the conditions of the mouth remain the same. A perfect fitting denture may not fit just a few months later if the bone starts to reabsorb. The problem with many denture providers is that they are not responsible for your changing oral conditions after your denture has been finished, so they may not offer cover for on going support.

6. What after care will you get with your denture?

What should you expect after your dentures have been finished and you take them home?

I personally offer up to five years after care plan with our premium plus dentures with full cover on all work that needs to be carried out in that time, but sadly most providers don't even offer complimentary adjustments after a month or so, so its well worth asking exactly what cover you are getting and how long for. You will probably find most clinical dental technician give much better support because they are able to

do it themselves unlike a dentist who will need to send the dentures back to the technician to have them altered. And yes, as you have probably just realised, a clinical dental technician will be able to fix any issues a lot faster.

7. What happens if something goes wrong?

What measures are in place and where do you go if you have a dispute?

The process of making and providing dentures is a very difficult one. If you ask any dentist what they feel is one of the most difficult tasks and a great deal of them will say providing dentures. Clinical dental technicians have it a bit easier because of all the resources they have to hand and their ability to resolve issues as they arise but, even so, it's still a very difficult task to make a denture and have little or no issues. Don't expect your new dentures to be comfortable right from the start because the chances are, they will need several adjustments to get them just right. We usually take five or six appointments to make the denture and then allow for about four or five adjustments to get them just right but sometimes it can take a few more and sometimes you may not need any. This is not a reflection on how well made or poor a denture may be but rather the very nature of the denture construction process. Lets look at what's involved to give you a better understanding of why adjustments are needed.

Firstly an impression of the mouth is needed and this is taken with a soft material, the material can compress the soft gum tissue whilst the impression is being taken and this compression will be reflected in the final finished denture. Also the impression material may have a slight expansion during the setting process, the plaster that is used will also have a certain amount of expansion and then the final acrylic will expand whilst being cooked. There are measures that can be taken to reduce these issues, for example, I will almost always use an addition cured silicone for taking impressions because of its low expansion rate and a very high quality plaster too. The injected acrylic dentures also have an extremely low expansion rate compared to high impact and standard acrylics. If, after four or five adjustments, the dentures are still not right, they may need to be remade. Sometimes, with hind sight a second attempt at making the denture is all that's needed. This may be because the teeth need to be set in a slightly different position, or maybe a different material needs to be used. In almost every case the remade denture will be just right.

If your denture is still not right after the remake and several more adjustments you may be entitled to your money back. Discuss this with your dental care provider to try and resolve the issue, if you still feel unhappy then you can contact the General Dental Council for more guidance on what to do next. The general Dental Council (GDC) can be contacted via their website www.gdc-uk.org or by phone on +44 (0)20 7167 6000.

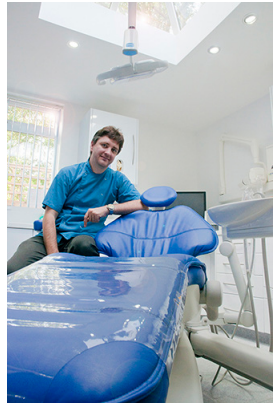
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About the Author

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Simon Miles is the owner of the Smiles Centres and practices as a clinical dental technician from the Smiles Centre Swindon Branch. He has a team of dedicated dental care professionals working for him and he is also a mentor for several trainee clinical dental technicians. Simon has been married for 7 years to his wife Anna Miles who is also a dental technician. They have two beautiful children together and three very ugly tortoises.

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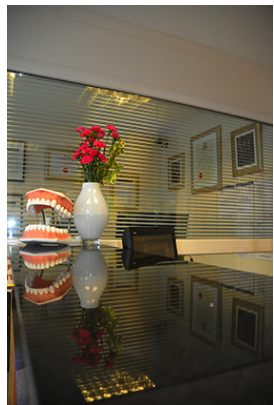
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About the Smiles Centre

Swindon Dental Practice
3 Beechcroft Road
Swindon
Wiltshire SN2 7RD

Although dedicated to the production and supply of dentures, the Smiles Centre Swindon is also a fully functional dental practice with general dentist, therapist, cosmetic and implant dentists which cover a very wide range of treatments.

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If you would like to speak to someone at the Smiles Centre about new dentures, why not give Opal a call?



She can arrange a free appointment for you so you can have an informal chat about what you want and how we can help!

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