



Dr Ian Sweeney

# WHY PREVENTION IS BETTER THAN CURE WITH TOOTH LOSS

**WITH MOST HEALTH** problems, prevention is almost always better than trying to find a cure and tooth loss is no exception.

## Mouthguards

Wearing a mouthguard is essential in the prevention of dental trauma whilst playing sport. Field sports including hockey, cricket and, of course, the contact football codes are all "at risk" sports for dental trauma. The simple act of wearing a custom fitted mouthguard can dramatically reduce the affect of a blow to the mouth.

Following the unfortunate event of losing a tooth, there are five options available. One option involves doing nothing; the other four involve restoring the missing tooth.

## Do Nothing

The advantage of doing nothing is that it is a simple, cost neutral, non-invasive option. Apart from the aesthetic concern of doing

nothing, the adjacent teeth may move, tilt, drift or over-erupt, potentially causing a larger problem in the future.

## Orthodontics

In some circumstances, orthodontic movement of the adjacent teeth to close the space created by the lost tooth may be the most appropriate option.

## Removable partial denture

This is a removable appliance worn in the mouth and is supported by the remaining teeth. A relatively simple option, however many people do not like the feel of having a foreign object in their mouth.

## Fixed bridgework

Bridges are supported by the adjacent teeth. The adjacent teeth are crowned and these crowns support the artificial tooth which is cemented into place. The disadvantage of a fixed bridge is the need to have three or more teeth joined together making cleaning

more difficult. If the adjacent teeth already have large restorations, they may benefit from being crowned. However, if the adjacent teeth are very heavily restored, the extra load from supporting the additional tooth may be detrimental to their long term prognosis.

## Implant supported teeth

The major advantage of this method is that no other teeth or appliances are used to replace the missing teeth. Essentially the missing tooth is replaced with a new tooth, without involving any of the remaining natural teeth. The down side of implants is that surgery is involved and the overall recovery time frame is extended.

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