Fillings vs. Crowns

What about just another filling? I know it would be big, but isn’t it okay?

Here are the advantages of a big filling:
1. Speed—everything is done in one visit.
2. Economy—the filling will cost 25-35% of what a crown will cost.

Here are the advantages of a crown:

It is long lasting. The filling can break forcing you to make another appointment and go through this same decision-making process again. A filling draws its strength from the tooth. The larger the filling, the weaker the tooth and the greater the chance the filling or the tooth will break! We believe a plastic filling should last 5-7 years and a silver filling 15 years. If you don’t get this length of service, then a crown would be better.

It has no mercury. Some people may be allergic to this substance. Silver fillings are 50% mercury.

It looks like a natural tooth. Even big silver fillings that do not show can cause a blue/gray discoloration of your tooth. The porcelain used in the crown can be custom shaded to closely match the appearance of your other teeth, and even improve their appearance.

It strengthens your tooth. A crown is a cast piece of metal that cannot break. A weak tooth that might fracture, can be strengthened by a crown.

How will my crown look?
1. Porcelain - natural tooth appearance
2. Gold - stronger, less wear, won’t break
3. Supporting core—sometimes a tooth is so weak, it won’t support a crown. In these cases, we will place a reinforcing core to hold the crown on. There is an extra fee for this core.

How will my crown feel?
It will feel just like a natural tooth—after a couple weeks you won’t even notice a difference!

Will the tooth abscess?
Teeth require crowns because they had problems in the past (large fillings, fractures, etc.). Most teeth are sore for 10-14 days after the crown preparation and some remain sensitive to cold indefinitely. However, statistically, only 6% will actually abscess.
Please take 2 Ibuoprofin after the tooth is prepared to reduce this sensitivity. Sometimes we will give you a prescription mouth rinse to heal sore gums. Chew on the other side to avoid loosening the temporary crown. If it does come loose, use a denture adhesive or toothpaste to hold it on.

Metal Core or All Porcelain Crown
All porcelain crowns are the most beautiful, esthetic crowns available. Light shines through them almost like natural teeth. Before you decide on an all porcelain crown, here are the advantages of having a metal core under the crown.
1. The metal will show very little or not at all when you smile or talk.
2. Metal adds strength and is necessary for most bridges and teeth that will have heavy biting stress.

All Porcelain Crown vs. Laminate Veneer
Laminate veneers were developed to avoid cutting away healthy tooth structure. Veneers only require removing 1mm of the outside and top of the tooth. Most insurance companies do not cover these veneers.

Clenching and Grinding
Heavy clenching and grinding can cause excessive wear on the natural teeth opposing a porcelain crown. A plastic mouthguard can be constructed to protect your teeth.

Dark Line at the Gumline
Sometimes when a person smiles, you can see a dark area where the crown stops and the tooth shows at the gum line. The root of the tooth is much darker/yellower than the porcelain of your crown. We can bring the porcelain up to the gum line, but if the gum recedes over the years, the root may become exposed. Sometimes we can cover the discolored area with plastic, if not, you can choose for us to make a new crown.

Metamerism
The problem in matching the shade of a porcelain crown to natural tooth is that they are dissimilar materials.

Everyone has had the experience of matching the shade of two materials inside a building and then going outside and seeing the materials have entirely different colors. Dissimilar materials look different from each other under different lighting conditions.

We will try to decrease this problem by matching the shades under several different lighting sources, but it will still be a problem.
Frequently asked questions about crowns:

1. Can teeth with crowns decay?
   Yes, the exposed tooth can decay if not cleaned properly.

2. What happens if a tooth’s nerve becomes infected after spending so many dollars?
   Will I lose the tooth?
   No! Treatment of the nerve usually can be performed on a tooth with or without a crown. Most root canal treated back teeth should be protected with crowns.

3. Will crowns loosen and come off?
   Less than 1% of the time. If this occurs, they usually can be recemented.

4. Can porcelain fracture?
   Yes, but so can natural enamel. If the porcelain fractures, the area can often be smoothed, but occasionally it will require remaking the crown. An all metal crown prevents this problem.

5. Will porcelain wear away?
   Very slightly. Porcelain is extremely wear & stain resistant. To prevent this collapse a false tooth would need to take the place of the lost natural tooth. This is more expensive and harder to maintain than it would have been to save your natural tooth in the first place.

Limited Warranty
The better you take care of your dental health, the longer your crown will last. The average lifespan of a single crown is 9.4 years and a fixed bridge is 11.2 years (insurance company estimates). About half of these failures were due to decay and gum disease. This means that regular recalls and good home care can double the life of your crown or bridge.

Porcelain never changes color but your natural teeth darken with time. Many people want crowns replaced after 15-20 years because the crowns look too white compared to their natural teeth.

We will replace or repair your crown for 3 years for any reason at no fee as long as you return for your regular recall cleaning appointments at the recommended interval.

After the crown is prepared
Expect the tooth and gums to be sore for several days. Take 2 Ibuprofen 1 hour before appointment, and continue every 4 hours as needed that day. Brush and floss your temporary cap daily. When you floss, pop it between the teeth and pull it out. If you pop it up you could pull the temporary crown off. If your temporary crown comes loose, you can replace it with denture adhesive from any pharmacy. Call us if you would like us to replace it.

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