

## **YOU NEED A TOOTH ‘CROWNED’**

### **What is a crown?**

It's a tooth shaped fitting made to cover the prepared remains of a heavily filled or damaged tooth. This strengthens the crown and the tooth's appearance is also improved. If there is insufficient amounts of tooth to hold a crown onto the root, a metal post will be needed as well. The post is made to fit into the root of the tooth with enough projecting out of the root to place an artificial crown over it. Post-retained crowns are more prone to coming out. If this happens only once every few years and the crown can be re-cemented each time, then many people would accept this rather than have a gap or a denture filled space. Alternatively, they may want to consider options such as a bridge or an implant, which are more expensive, but don't depend on using such a fragile root.

### **What are they made of ?**

Porcelain alone, metal alone or porcelain fused over a metal inner layer.

Metal alone is unbreakable. Porcelain covered crowns are more easily camouflaged to look like a real tooth, but can chip when overloaded. If a person grinds their teeth at night, this is more likely.

### **How long will my crown last?**

Longer than the tooth is likely to without a crown. All crowns have a twelve-month warranty. If the patient is grinding in their sleep or accidentally crunches a bone or glass, then porcelain coverings may chip off. In the case of people who are grinding their teeth, maybe unknowingly, then a bite guard may be recommended to protect the crown and the rest of the teeth.

### **Possible problems of the tooth to be crowned?**

A radiograph is taken to rule out obvious pre-existing problems with the tooth being considered for a crown. However, this is only able to see gross decay or infection, not all cell inflammation within the pulp of the tooth. So even those that look trouble free can become so. This is not wholly unexpected as only teeth with a past history of trouble need to be crowned. The nerve in such teeth can be unhealthy but pain-free; the dormant problem can come to light after the crown has been done. However, it must be understood that it is not always the end of the tooth. In fact, having been strengthened it is less likely to fall apart while the root canals are being cleaned out and filled to eliminate symptoms.

### **NHS v Private Laboratory crown work?**

If all goes well, NHS crowns are very adequate. If they have a good fit they must go on first time the fees do not give scope for subtle adjustments of shape or colour. Private crowns use materials that allow the dentist and technician to give full vent of their skills in creating the most realistic replacement tooth. NHS crown cost from £120 to £160. Private workmanship starts at £230 upwards.