



# Ask Dr. Grant



DR GRANT IS A RENOWNED COSMETIC DENTIST TREATING PATIENTS BOTH NATIONALLY AND INTERNATIONALLY, THE ONLY COSMETIC DENTIST IN THE REGION GRANTED PRACTISING PRIVILEGES AT NUFFIELD HOSPITAL, EXETER

## Dental crowns – What's the story?

### What are crowns?

A crown (or 'cap') is a tooth-shaped covering that fits over a badly decayed or broken down tooth or dental implant. It can improve the strength and/or appearance of a tooth.

### Why have one?

Crowns are the ideal dental restoration for broken teeth or ones weakened by decay or large fillings. The beautiful architecture of a natural tooth can be destroyed by many factors: decay, acid erosion, aggressive tooth-brushing, abrasive toothpastes, trauma. The shape and function will therefore need to be restored, but fillings have their limitations, often leaving crowns as the best option.

### Who is more prone?

People with a high sugar intake and/or poor dental hygiene, which increases the risk of decay. People who do contact/high-impact sports: a traumatic blow may mean a tooth can only be saved by fitting a crown. People who grind their teeth through habit or stress.

### Any choices?

There are four main types of crown: 1) all metal – gold or silver colour; 2) porcelain bonded to metal; 3) all porcelain; 4) ceramic. Each involves a trade-off

between cosmetic appearance, removal of the tooth surface, strength and/or cost. Option one is strong and also the cheapest of the four, but ugly. Option two is strong and initially looks natural, but the metal shows through over time. Option three is natural looking but not as strong, and option four looks natural and combines the strength of a bonded crown with the appearance of a porcelain crown.

### What about treatment?

A thorough examination, including an X-ray, is needed to ensure the root is of sound health and to assess the health of all the supporting structures, especially the gums. You'll need to make at least two visits: the first to prepare or drill the tooth to the ideal shape for the chosen crown, take dental impressions or a matching shade and fit the temporary crown; and the second for fitting the permanent crown. There will usually be one to two weeks between appointments.

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### How long will they last?

This depends on how well you look after them! The generally quoted average is 10 years, but they can last much longer with proper care.

### Any downsides?

Extensive, irreversible tooth removal and higher costs compared to fillings (but remember: it's usually the damage to a tooth that dictates the need for a crown in the first place). Trauma to any tooth, including removing the tooth surface to fit a crown, may cause the tooth nerve to die, necessitating a subsequent root treatment.

### Cost?

£300 to £1,000 per crown depending on the type (metal are usually cheapest, porcelain and ceramic more expensive). But don't forget crowns can last for many years, so don't always pick the cheapest. As ever, when making up your mind, go for trust and experience, not simply cost. **BY**

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