

Goossens & Odendaal

Dental Specialists

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Metal-free adhesive bridges.

Missing front teeth can in some cases be replaced with adhesive bridges. They can be made from metal, fibre-reinforced composite resin, zirconia or ceramic.

We usually use tooth coloured pressed ceramic with porcelain fired onto it. The tooth is first etched with a mild acid before the adhesive bridge is bonded to the adjacent tooth with a composite resin cement that bonds to tooth structure. Both the composite resin cement and bonding agent are perfectly safe, and no harm is caused to the enamel underneath. The tooth onto which the bridge is bonded will feel slightly thicker to the tongue, but you'll get used to this within a few days.

The restorations are made from porcelain which cannot be bleached. If you are considering having your teeth bleached, we should do so before doing the bridge, and match the shade of the material to the rest of your teeth.

As most people grind their teeth in their sleep, the adhesive bridge must be protected with either an orthodontic retainer or biteplate at night, to protect it from fracture during tooth-grinding.

Your teeth tend to change appearance as you get older (they become darker, wear, and develop small cracks). The bridge does not undergo these changes, and it will eventually appear unnatural. Although the bridge will still be functional, the appearance might not be to your liking anymore, and it would have to be replaced.

The life-span of adhesive bridges will depend on how well you clean your teeth and how you use the front teeth. Insufficient cleaning can lead to decay or discoloration on the margins where the ceramic meets the enamel. These can usually be polished a few times before the restoration has to be replaced. You will be instructed on how to clean carefully, and you would need to attend regular review appointments with both our oral hygienist and myself.

No dental restoration is ever as strong as healthy natural enamel. You would therefore have to be more careful on how you use the front teeth. Biting into a sandwich shouldn't be a problem, but biting into a tough chewy baguette might dislodge the bridge. Biting foreign objects like fingernails, bottle tops, glue caps, fishing line, electrical wires or tearing open cellophane wrapping will also cause breakdown of the resin cement or fracture of the ceramic base of the bridge. If de-bonded, the bridge can be cleaned and replaced. If fractured it would have to be replaced.

Provided the adhesive bridges are well maintained and not abused, they can last anything from 5 to 10 or even 15 years, depending on the position of the teeth and the strength of your bite.