

# Denture maintenance saves money and lives

Most people who wear removable dentures do not receive regular dental care. Unfortunately, there is a perception that dentures last forever and that regular dental evaluations are only needed when teeth are present. Nothing could be farther from the truth!

Besides the obvious truth that dentures break and wear out, it is well-documented that oral cancer rates in complete denture wearers are much higher than those with natural dentition, and the survival rates of oral cancer in complete denture patients is much lower than oral cancer patients with teeth. It should be obvious that this is because people who have teeth tend to present for dental examinations much more frequently than those with dentures. When a denture patient presents with painful oral cancer, the lesions have most likely metastasized significantly.

Every denture patient should be seen by a dentist every 1-2 years, and a panoramic radiograph should be taken periodically as well to rule out any bone lesions. Since the bony ridges that support dentures change regularly, it is reasonable that the fit of dentures to these ridges must be improved regularly. Typically, relines accomplish this quite well, if they are done as soon as denture retention is lost. Most experts agree that dentures should be relined every 2-3 years to be most predictable. With the variety of financing options now available, regular den-

ture maintenance is affordable for nearly everyone.



**Dr. Kevin Huff**  
Dentist

Because the human body has a wonderful ability to accommodate minor

*Regular dental examinations allow dentists to monitor denture therapy and the health of the supporting tissues. In light of current information about oral cancer and modern techniques for early cancer detection, regular dental visits – especially for complete denture wearers – save lives!*

changes, most denture wearers do not realize that their prostheses do not fit properly until they break or cause unhealing sore spots. Often, the only solution is to fabricate an entirely new set of complete dentures, which may be very costly if phased denture therapy is necessary, and if surgery is necessary to make fitting a new denture possible.

Whenever a sore spot occurs with a denture, there is a reason for it, which typi-

cally is that the bone that originally supported the denture is no longer there. One of the errors often made, intentionally or unintentionally, is to simply "relieve" the sore spot by grinding on the denture. If the denture originally fit well and caused no pain, shortening the denture in that area only compromises the fit further. A reline would probably be more appropriate. Even with appropriate denture maintenance and timely relines, most dentures should be replaced about every 5-7 years due to wear and tear.

Regular dental examinations allow dentists to monitor denture therapy and the health of the supporting tissues. Since complicated complete denture rehabilitation is often very costly, especially when a great deal of supporting bone has been lost, timely maintenance can save a great deal of money. Furthermore, in light of current information that is known about oral cancer and modern techniques for early cancer detection, regular dental visits—especially for complete denture wearers—save lives!

*Dr. Kevin Huff is a general dentist in Dover, holds the status of "Master" in the Academy of General Dentistry, and is a clinical instructor at the Case School of Dental Medicine. For questions about dental health or to schedule a complementary consultation, call 330-364-2011, visit [www.doctorhuff.net](http://www.doctorhuff.net), or ask your regular dentist.*