

Denture myths

Contrary to popular misunderstanding, dentures require regular maintenance, relines, repairs, and replacement. In fact, the average denture should be relined every two to three years and replaced every five to seven years. There are many reasons for this maintenance interval and for regular dental examinations, whether or not the patient perceives any problem.

The first problem has to do with the basic function of the bone surrounding natural teeth. Natural teeth are held into their sockets by thousands of “cables”, called the periodontal ligament, that tug and pull on the supporting bone during function. The bone is designed to be strengthened and stimulated in this manner. When teeth are extracted, the bone no longer gets appropriate stimulation, and shrinkage occurs unless it is directly loaded again with dental implants. Bone atrophy is accelerated by inappropriate forces caused by loose and ill-fitting dentures.

Relining, or replacing the tissue surface of the denture, helps preserve bone by readapting dentures to the gums as they shrink, but it



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is only helpful for dentures that are otherwise in good condition and that have an appropriate bite. Relining also helps to encourage health of soft tissues because denture acrylic is porous and becomes heavily laden with bacteria and yeast over time. Relining refreshes the tissue surface of dentures with healthy new acrylic. Sometimes, a more advanced type of relining, called rebasing, is the treatment of choice when all of the pink portion of a denture is in poor condition and needs to be replaced.

New dentures should be made when relining or rebasing of dentures can no longer reestablish proper fit and function. Often this is obvious by wear or fracture of the denture teeth. However, sometimes it is not apparently obvious to the untrained eye. However, when dentures contribute to headaches or when the patient's face begins to look “collapsed” or

“old”, then the need for new dentures is likely.

Lastly, but certainly not of least importance, denture wearers need to stay current with regular dental examinations to minimize the risk of developing oral cancer. Since most people feel that they do not need to go to the dentist once they have dentures, many early suspicious pre-cancerous lesions are missed. Everyone is at risk for oral cancer, whether they have teeth or not. In fact, the constant trauma and lack of blood circulation caused by chronic denture wear increases the chances for oral cancer development. For this reason alone, annual dental examinations are recommended for denture wearers.

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For questions about dental health or to schedule a complimentary consultation, call 330-364-2011, visit www.doctorhuff.net, or ask your regular dentist.