

A Tooth That Cannot Be Fixed...

Dentists take pride in saving teeth. That's what we do. We stress preventative therapy (cleanings, fluoride applications, exams, gum treatment, and dental sealants) to help patients keep teeth their whole lives. When cavities do happen, we try to intervene as gently as possible, usually with fillings or crowns. Sometimes, when a tooth is too far broken or has decayed for too long, root canal therapy is initiated to save that tooth. Unfortunately, there are times when an individual tooth or set of teeth just cannot be reliably repaired for the long run.

One of the most common reasons people lose teeth is gum disease or periodontitis. Gum disease is generally a slow process that causes your body to resorb the jawbone that holds your teeth in place. This process can be sped up by health problems (diabetes), as well as habits (smoking, not flossing and brushing). When a tooth has little bone to hold it in place and the disease cannot be managed (they are usually loose), extraction is often the final solution.

Tooth decay is another big cause of lost teeth. To fix any tooth, whether it needs a root canal, filling, or crown, there must be some healthy, sound structure left over to build a new tooth onto. Teeth can get so rotted out from cavities that they just cannot be fixed and must be removed to prevent infection.

Finally, the many faces of trauma cause a lot of lost teeth. A tooth broken off at or below the gum line usually has a poor chance of being restored to new. Trauma comes in all shapes and forms, from sports accidents to car wrecks to biting down wrong on an old filling. Every case is different.

There is a long, technical list of the many other causes of lost teeth. Certain diseases, tooth wear, genetic problems, severe grinding, and cancer treatments can all cause or lead to tooth loss. The good news is that we have more ways than ever to give you your natural looking and functioning teeth back. Implant dentistry is continuing to evolve and grow by leaps and bounds. I am confident the day will come (maybe not in my career) when we will actually grow teeth back. Until then, there are a lot of good options if you ever lose a tooth.

Until next time, keep smiling.

-Please send comments to Drs. Parrish through www.ParrishDental.com.