

## Nothing Lasts Forever...

A couple months ago, I had my two front teeth redone. A meeting with a basketball court at the age of ten or so gifted me a lifetime of dental maintenance on those two teeth. At the age of thirty-five, I'm on my third set of crowns. Unfortunately, nothing lasts forever. Not even for a dentist...married to a dentist.

Many a discussion in our office leads to the common question of, "Doc, how long will this fix of this tooth last me?"

As with any health issue, the answer will always vary from person to person. Unfortunately, there is no set life span of any filling, crown, implant, root canal, denture, or any other dental restoration. Everyone is different and nothing lasts forever. Even tooth extractions can be reversed with dental implants. Any estimate of how long a restoration might last is an educated guess.

We've seen the best looking of dental work fail and questionable dental work last (at least longer than expected). Why? Each and every one of us has a different mix of diet, oral hygiene, bite, and bacteria living in our mouths. The mix of these four has a major effect on how long repaired teeth last, as well as a patient's vulnerability to gum disease and cavities. Many dental procedures fail because of the environment they live in. The mouth, filled with acid, bacteria, strong biting forces, and constant use, is a tough place to thrive.

So how does one make their teeth and replacements last? As with a lot of things in life, the goal is to control what you can control and do not spend energy on the things you cannot. Maintenance is often the key.

First off, follow directions. At the end of most any dental procedure, a dentist or dental assistant will go through a list of do's and don'ts. Following these directions is a good way to help things last.

Secondly, take care of yourself. We see quite a few failures, simply because patients do not maintain their dental work. Brush. Floss. Use fluoride rinses and toothpaste. Keep a regular schedule of recommended dental cleanings and exams. Small problems can often be caught on routine exams and fixed before they become catastrophic. Put yourself first.

Finally, be aware of your teeth. Failing teeth or dental restorations often give us hints that there is a problem. A little twinge here or some cold or sweet sensitivity there is often your body warning of an impending problem. Listen to the whispers and see a dentist before an infection and pain sets in. Take care of you.

Until next week, keep smiling.

-Please send comments to Drs. Parrish at [www.ParrishDental.com](http://www.ParrishDental.com).