



The Truth

About Cleaning “False Teeth”

If you have lost your teeth due to the natural aging process, periodontal disease, decay, or injury, you know that dentures can be a lifesaver. Dentures may be “false teeth,” but the truth is they give people back their smiles and oral function. And just as you need to take good care of your natural teeth to ensure a healthy smile, you need to adopt good oral care for your dentures to ensure that they stay in tip-top shape.

Just like natural teeth, dentures should be brushed daily to remove food particles, as well as the bacteria and plaque that can develop, according to the American Dental Association (ADA). Brushing also helps prevent dentures from becoming stained. The best tool for this is a dual-head brush designed specifically for cleaning dentures; however, a regular toothbrush with soft bristles is just as effective. Steer clear of hard-bristled brushes as they can damage dentures.

To clean dentures, you first want to rinse away loose food particles thoroughly with water. Then, moisten the brush and apply denture cleanser, which comes in cream, gel, or paste formulas. Brush every denture surface, being careful to not scrub so hard that you damage the dentures, and rinse the dentures again. Denture cleansers should not be applied while dentures are in your mouth.

Another convenient and common cleaning option is using denture cleanser tablets that, when added to warm water, create an effervescent solution. Soaking dentures in the solution helps kill bacteria that can cause odors. Depending on the manufacturer’s instructions, you will soak the dentures anywhere from a few minutes to overnight. In addition to helping keep them clean, placing dentures in water or a denture cleanser solution helps the dentures retain their shape, remain pliable, and keep them from drying out, says the ADA. Never use hot water, though, as that could cause them to warp.

Some denture wearers use hand soap or mild dishwashing liquid, both of which are acceptable for cleaning dentures. However, be sure to avoid powdered household cleansers, which may be too abrasive, and never use bleach, as this may discolor the gum-colored portion of the denture. If you do use a household product, be sure to rinse the dentures thoroughly before reinserting them in your mouth.

Because dentures are delicate and could break or get damaged if dropped even a few inches, be extra gentle when handling them. You may want to stand over a folded hand towel or basin of water when removing and cleaning your dentures, so that if you do drop them, they will land on a soft surface.

Even though you wear dentures, you still need to exercise good oral health for the rest of your mouth. Every day, before you put in your dentures, be sure to brush your gums, tongue, and palate with a soft-bristled brush to remove any plaque that may have formed. Brushing also stimulates the circulation in your mouth. You’ll also want to continue with routine dental checkups, so that your dentist can examine both your dentures and your mouth.

