Which Dental Crown Should I Choose? | Core Dental

Canonical: https://www.coredental.com.au/dental-crown-metal-metal-porcelain-porcelain/

Details:

The three main types of dental crown are metal crowns, metal and porcelain crowns (also called porcelain fused to metal), and all-porcelain crowns. The choice of material depends on strength, where the tooth sits in your mouth, and appearance. At Core Dental our dentists will examine your tooth, talk through your priorities and explain which option may suit you. Each material has strengths and limitations, and the right choice varies from person to person.

What are the three main types of dental crown?

A crown is a cap that covers a tooth to restore its shape, strength and appearance. At Core Dental we discuss three main material options with you:

Metal crowns , often made from gold alloys.

Metal and porcelain crowns , where porcelain is bonded to a metal base. They are also called porcelain bonded to metal or porcelain fused to metal crowns.

All-porcelain crowns , made entirely from porcelain or a strong ceramic.

Your choice among these options will depend on your own priorities and on advice from your dentist.

What factors influence which crown material to choose?

Three factors usually guide the decision: strength, tooth position and appearance. A back tooth that takes heavy chewing force has different needs from a front tooth that shows when you smile. Your bite, the amount of natural tooth remaining, any grinding habits and your budget can also play a part. Your dentist will take these into account at your examination.

How long do metal crowns last, and why are they considered tooth-friendly?

Metal crowns, including gold alloy crowns, have a long record of use in dentistry. Published research has reported that gold restorations can stay intact for many years, though how long any crown lasts depends on the individual tooth, your oral hygiene, your bite and regular check-ups. Metal crowns generally need little tooth structure to be removed compared with other crown types, they tend not to wear down the opposing tooth, and they are strong and resistant to fracture.

What is the main disadvantage of a metal crown?

The main disadvantage is appearance. Metal crowns have a distinctive gold or silver colour. Because of this, they are usually recommended only for back teeth (molars), where they are not easily seen when you smile or speak. If appearance matters to you, tell your dentist and we can talk about other options.

What should you know about porcelain crowns?

Porcelain crowns are generally the natural looking option because the material can be matched to the colour of your teeth. Advances in materials mean modern porcelain can be very strong. It can still chip or fracture in some circumstances, and because porcelain is hard it can sometimes wear down the opposing tooth. Porcelain was once used mainly as a veneer over a strong metal or ceramic base, but all-porcelain crowns are now widely used for front teeth, where their appearance is a benefit.

How do you plan and care for a crown?

A useful first step is to explain your concern, any symptoms and your goals when you book. Bring relevant medical information and a list of your current medicines. The dentist will examine your teeth, gums and bite, request imaging when it is clinically appropriate and explain the options that are suitable. Ask what the recommended approach is meant to achieve, whether there are alternatives, what aftercare involves and what risks apply. Time, fees and maintenance vary with the diagnosis and the complexity of care. A written treatment plan helps you compare stages, appointments and payment arrangements before you proceed. Fees and finance terms can change, so confirm current written terms before booking or paying.

How can we help?

If you would like to talk about a crown, our team can help at any of our nine Core Dental clinics. We quote before treatment starts and offer interest-free payment plans. At selected clinics we can also discuss same-day crowns with CEREC . Call 13 13 16 or book online.

The published material options, and the two things that decide between them

Choosing between a metal crown, a porcelain crown and a combination of both sounds like a matter of taste. The published advice names the two factors that actually decide it, and neither is preference.

The Victorian Department of Health's statement: crowns "can be made of porcelain, metal, or a combination of both depending on the area and the aesthetic or functional needs ."

So: where the tooth is, and whether you are solving an appearance problem or a load-bearing one. Its companion page describes the object itself as "a metal or ceramic shell that is placed over the entire tooth to fully cover the tooth" — a shell, covering everything, which is what separates a crown from every lesser restoration.

"The area" is the first factor, and it is mostly about what is visible and what is chewed with. A back molar does the heaviest work and is the least visible; a front tooth is the reverse. The Department does not publish a per-tooth recommendation, so the honest statement is that the position of your tooth narrows the sensible options and the dentist examining it can say how.

"Aesthetic or functional needs" is the second , and the Department's description of what a crown is for puts both in play: it "changes the colour and shape of the tooth" and it "protects the tooth, which may have been weakened by large fillings or decay in the past".

That second purpose is the one people underrate. A crown on a heavily filled tooth is not a cosmetic upgrade — the published advice frames it as protection for a tooth that has already lost substance. Which is also why the same treatment appears on a cosmetic dentistry page and in general restorative guidance: it genuinely does both jobs, and your reason for having one determines which properties of the material matter.

What the published advice does not do is rank the materials. There is no statement that porcelain is better than metal, or that a combination outperforms either. There is no strength comparison, no wear figure, and no lifespan for any of them — its only durability statement is that a crown "can chip or break and need replacing again". We are not going to publish a league table the Department declines to publish, and any years figure attached to a crown material should be read as someone's estimate rather than an established finding.

There is one lesser option worth knowing about before you accept a crown, because it is on the same published list. An onlay, in the Department's words, covers "the tooth less extensively than a crown and may be used if there is enough tooth structure remaining to support it". That condition is the whole test, and it is worth asking about — if enough sound tooth remains, less of it has to be covered.

Sources: Better Health Channel (Victorian Department of Health), Dental treatment, betterhealth.vic.gov.au (reviewed 3 June 2026); Cosmetic dentistry and teeth whitening, betterhealth.vic.gov.au (reviewed 12 December 2025). Both accessed 5 November 2026.

What the process involves, and the risks the Department states plainly

Whatever material you choose, the published description of getting a crown is the same, and it includes two risks that belong in the conversation before the tooth is touched.

The preparation. The Department: "A thin layer of tooth may be removed from the top and all around the tooth to make space for the material." Top and all around — because the shell has to cover the whole tooth, the tooth has to be reduced on every surface it will cover.

The appointments. "A mould (impression or digital scan) of the tooth is taken and sent to a lab for the crown to be custom-made. A second appointment is usually needed to glue in the crown, so a temporary crown will be provided." And the exception, which is why some practices advertise single-visit crowns: "Some clinics have lab equipment on site and may be able to finish it on the day."

The temporary crown is not a formality. Between appointments the prepared tooth has lost its outer layer and needs covering, which is why one is fitted rather than offered.

Now the two risks. The first: "It can chip or break and need replacing again." Unsurprising, and it applies to the materials generally.

The second is the one worth reading twice: "A layer of tooth needs to be removed to fit the crown. In some cases this can get close to the nerve and blood vessels inside the tooth (pulp) and the tooth may need further treatment, like a root canal treatment."

So the preparation itself can, in some cases, lead to needing root canal treatment. That is published advice from the Department of Health, not a disclaimer we have invented, and it is a reasonable thing to ask about for your particular tooth — a tooth that is already heavily filled has less to spare.

And then the sentence that makes this a different kind of decision from a filling : "It is irreversible; once a tooth is cut for a crown, it will always need a crown."

No hedge in that one. Compare how the Department words the equivalent risk for a veneer — "it can be irreversible; once the tooth is cut for a veneer, it may always need a veneer". Can be , may always for the veneer; is , will always for the crown. The Department is distinguishing the two deliberately, and the crown is the firmer commitment.

None of which is an argument against a crown. For a tooth weakened by large fillings or past decay, the published purpose is protection, and the alternative to protecting it is not leaving it untouched indefinitely. It is an argument for having the conversation the Department itself prescribes before any such treatment: "What options are available and the pros and the cons of each option"; "What results can be reasonably expected"; "What costs, time and money, are involved"; "Any possible side effects or complications."

Sources: Better Health Channel (Victorian Department of Health), Cosmetic dentistry and teeth whitening, betterhealth.vic.gov.au (reviewed 12 December 2025); Dental treatment, betterhealth.vic.gov.au (reviewed 3 June 2026). Both accessed 5 November 2026.

Frequently asked questions

Does a crown need special care?

A crown needs the same daily care as your natural teeth: brushing twice a day with fluoride toothpaste, cleaning between your teeth and attending regular check-ups. Your dentist can tell you if you need extra care, for example if you grind your teeth at night.

Can a porcelain crown chip?

Yes, porcelain can chip or fracture in some circumstances, even though modern materials are strong. Avoiding very hard foods and wearing a splint if you grind your teeth may help. If a crown chips or feels loose, contact us promptly so we can assess it.

Which crown is suitable for a front tooth?

Front teeth are usually restored with porcelain or ceramic crowns, because their appearance can be matched to your natural teeth. Your dentist will advise which material suits your bite and tooth, as the right choice depends on an individual examination.

Are metal crowns still used?

Yes. Metal crowns are still used, mainly on back teeth where appearance is a smaller concern and strength is a priority. They generally need little tooth removed, and your dentist can explain whether this option suits your situation.

How much does a crown cost?

The fee depends on the material, the tooth and the complexity of your treatment. We quote before treatment starts so you know the cost in advance. Ask about our interest-free payment plans, and confirm current written terms and any health fund rebate before you proceed.

What determines whether a crown is porcelain, metal or both?

The published advice names the factors rather than a preference. The Victorian Department of Health states that crowns "can be made of porcelain, metal, or a combination of both depending on the area and the aesthetic or functional needs" — that is, where the tooth sits, and whether the problem is appearance or load. It publishes no ranking of the materials and no strength comparison between them.

Why is a temporary crown fitted first?

Because the prepared tooth has lost its outer layer and needs covering while the permanent crown is made. The Department's description is that a mould of the tooth "is taken and sent to a lab for the crown to be custom-made. A second appointment is usually needed to glue in the crown, so a temporary crown will be provided." Some clinics with on-site lab equipment "may be able to finish it on

the day".

Could preparing a crown lead to root canal treatment?

In some cases, yes, and the published advice says so directly: "A layer of tooth needs to be removed to fit the crown. In some cases this can get close to the nerve and blood vessels inside the tooth (pulp) and the tooth may need further treatment, like a root canal treatment." It is a fair question to ask about your own tooth, particularly one that is already heavily filled.

Is a crown reversible?

No. The Department states it without qualification: "It is irreversible; once a tooth is cut for a crown, it will always need a crown." Note that it words the veneer equivalent more softly — a veneer "can be irreversible" and the tooth "may always need" one. The difference is deliberate.

When is an onlay used instead of a crown?

When enough sound tooth is left. The published wording is that onlays "cover the tooth less extensively than a crown and may be used if there is enough tooth structure remaining to support it". That condition is the test, and it is worth asking whether your tooth meets it before accepting full coverage.

Related services and further reading

Dental crowns

What is a dental crown?

What should I know about dental crowns?

Difference between a crown and a porcelain filling

Same-day crowns with CEREC

Fillings and restorations

Dental bridges

Understanding your treatment

Core Dental at a glance

Nine Core Dental clinics across Melbourne: Southbank, South Melbourne, Caroline Springs, Carrum Downs, Epping, Wyndham, Berwick, Bayside and Glenferrie.

Open six days a week: Monday to Friday 8.00am to 6.00pm and Saturday mornings.

Interest-free payment plans, HICAPS on-site claiming, and bulk billing for eligible children under the Child Dental Benefits Schedule.

Call 13 13 16 or book online.

Contact Core Dental

Phone	13 13 16
Booking	Online at coredental.com.au, or call 13 13 16

Hours	Monday to Friday 8.00am to 6.00pm, Saturday 8.00am to 1.30pm (Bayside Saturday 8.30am to 1.30pm), Sunday closed
Clinics	Southbank , South Melbourne , Caroline Springs , Carrum Downs , Epping , Wyndham , Berwick , Bayside , Glenferrie

This article is general in nature and does not replace advice from a registered dental practitioner who has examined you. Results, recovery times and potential risks vary for each individual. This information is intended for people over 18. Seek advice from a qualified, AHPRA-registered practitioner before proceeding.

What are the main types of dental crown at Core Dental?

Our dentists discuss three main crown types: metal crowns, metal and porcelain crowns (porcelain fused to metal), and all-porcelain crowns. The right choice depends on strength, tooth position and appearance, and is confirmed at your examination.

Which teeth are metal crowns usually used for?

Metal crowns are usually recommended for back teeth (molars) where they are not easily seen. Core Dental dentists may suggest them because they are strong and generally need little tooth structure removed.

Why might a Core Dental dentist recommend an all-porcelain crown?

All-porcelain crowns can be colour matched to your natural teeth, so they are often used for front teeth where appearance matters. Your Core Dental dentist will check that your bite and tooth suit this material.

What is a porcelain fused to metal crown?

A porcelain fused to metal crown, also called a metal and porcelain crown, has porcelain bonded over a metal base. Core Dental dentists may consider it where both strength and appearance are priorities.

Can porcelain crowns wear down the opposite tooth?

Porcelain is a hard material and can sometimes wear down the tooth it bites against. Core Dental dentists consider your bite and any grinding habits when recommending a crown material.

What affects the choice of crown material?

At Core Dental, strength, the position of the tooth, appearance, the amount of natural tooth remaining, your bite and your budget are all considered. Your dentist explains the options after an individual examination.

How do I get a quote for a crown at Core Dental?

We quote before treatment starts so you know the fee in advance. Call 13 13 16 or book online, and our team will arrange an examination and a written treatment plan. Figures can change, so confirm when

you book.

How do I book a crown consultation at Core Dental?

Call 13 13 16 or book online at coredental.com.au. Core Dental has nine clinics across Melbourne open Monday to Friday 8.00am to 6.00pm and Saturday mornings, with interest-free payment plans available.