What Is a Dental Crown and When Is One Used? | Core Dental

Canonical: https://www.coredental.com.au/what-is-a-dental-crown/

Details:

A dental crown, sometimes called a dental cap, is a fixed restoration that completely covers an existing tooth. Its purpose is to protect and strengthen a tooth while restoring its shape, size and appearance. At Core Dental we may recommend a crown for a tooth that is damaged, broken, heavily restored or weakened, including after root canal treatment, and a crown can also sit on a dental implant to replace a missing tooth. Whether a crown suits you depends on an examination by your dentist.

What are the main purposes of a dental crown?

A crown can be used to:

protect damaged, broken or compromised teeth

restore tooth structure lost to decay, fractures or wear

support and strengthen a tooth after root canal treatment

replace a missing tooth when attached to the titanium screw of a dental implant

improve the appearance of discoloured, badly shaped or worn teeth

How is a crown designed to fit with your other teeth?

The shape, size, colour and surface of a crown are matched to the surrounding teeth, so that it blends in and works with your bite. A crown can also change the length, width, alignment and shade of the tooth it covers, within the limits of what is suitable for that tooth. Your dentist will talk through what is possible for your smile before treatment starts.

Can a crown replace a missing tooth?

Yes, in combination with a dental implant. The implant acts as the root, and the crown is attached to the titanium screw of the implant to replace the visible part of the missing tooth. Not everyone is suitable for an implant, and your dentist will assess your gums, bone and general health first. You can read more about dental implants on our site.

What types of dental crowns are there?

Crowns can be made from different materials, and your dentist will advise which suits the tooth involved. Common options include:

Porcelain crowns: tooth-coloured and often chosen where appearance matters.

Metal crowns: made from metal alloys and sometimes chosen for back teeth that take heavy biting forces.

Metal and porcelain crowns: a metal base with a porcelain layer over it.

Our article on metal, metal and porcelain, and porcelain crowns explains the differences in more detail. Some Core Dental clinics, including Epping, South Melbourne and Caroline Springs, offer CEREC same-day crowns. You can read about CEREC same-day crowns at Core Dental or ask when you book whether a same-day crown may suit your tooth.

How is a dental crown placed?

Placing a crown usually takes at least two appointments. The steps are:

Assessment of the tooth. Your dentist checks whether enough healthy tooth remains to support a crown.

Preparing the tooth. The outer surface of the tooth is shaped slightly to make room for the crown.

Taking an impression. A mould or digital scan is taken to make a model of your tooth so the crown can be made.

Placing a temporary crown. A temporary cap protects the tooth while the permanent crown is made by the laboratory, which usually takes one to two weeks.

Making the crown. The laboratory creates the crown to fit your tooth.

Fitting the crown. Your dentist cements the crown in place once the fit and feel are suitable for both of you, with adjustments if needed.

How long does a dental crown last?

How long a crown lasts depends on how well it is looked after, the material used and the wear and tear it receives. Many crowns last for several years, and often well over a decade with good care, but this varies from person to person. Crowns can still chip, fracture, decay at the edges or come loose, so it is important to look after them as you would your natural teeth. Regular check-ups and careful cleaning around the edges of the crown help it to last.

What should you ask your dentist about a crown?

Useful questions include whether a crown is the right option for your tooth, what alternatives there are, which material is suggested and why, how many visits you will need, what the written quote includes, and how to care for the crown afterwards. Recommendations depend on an individual examination and diagnosis.

How can we help?

If you have a cracked, worn or heavily filled tooth, or a tooth that has had root canal treatment, our team can examine it and explain your options at any of our nine Core Dental practices. Call 13 13 16 or book online. We quote before treatment starts, and you can ask about our interest-free payment plans . You may also like our guide to what you should know about dental crowns .

Further detail from Core Dental

The following points are drawn from Core Dental's own published material on this topic. They are included here for completeness, and anything that applies to your own treatment should be confirmed with your clinician.

Each material has its own pros and cons and are selected based on the location of your tooth, your preference, function of the tooth and aesthetics. An impression/mould is taken – either physically or digitally to provide a model of your tooth for the construction of the crown. Maintenance of the crown involves regular check ups and cleaning around its margins to ensure it lasts a long time.

What a crown is, what it does, and what it costs the tooth

A crown is described in the published advice in a way that makes both its value and its price in tooth structure explicit. Both halves belong on the same page.

What it is. The Victorian Department of Health: "A metal or ceramic shell that is placed over the entire tooth to fully cover the tooth." Its gapped-teeth page adds a fuller description: "a permanent type of tooth covering made of porcelain or metal or both that is used to cover, protect, restore and improve the shape and function of your teeth."

What it does. Two things on the Department's list: 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 what distinguishes a crown from a veneer. A veneer's listed purposes are cosmetic — covering surface defects and changing colour and shape — with no protective claim attached. A crown is the option with a structural job.

How it is made and fitted. "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. Some clinics have lab equipment on site and may be able to finish it on the day."

So a temporary crown is the normal interim rather than a sign of a problem, and on-site laboratory equipment is the exception that changes the timeline — worth asking a clinic directly.

What is removed to make room. "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 — which is more than a veneer, where "a thin layer of tooth may be removed from the surface of the tooth".

The three published risks.

"It can chip or break and need replacing again."

"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 irreversible; once a tooth is cut for a crown, it will always need a crown."

The second risk is the one most worth asking about in advance: preparing a tooth for a crown can approach the pulp, and the consequence named is root canal treatment. The third is stated without any hedge — always need a crown.

Sources: Better Health Channel (Victorian Department of Health), Cosmetic dentistry and teeth whitening, betterhealth.vic.gov.au (reviewed 12 December 2025); Teeth - gapped teeth, betterhealth.vic.gov.au (reviewed 1 July 2025). Both accessed 6 November 2026.

When a crown is the indicated option, and what comes with it

Crowns appear in the published advice in several contexts, and reading them together shows when a crown is the recommendation rather than a choice.

After root canal treatment, for a tooth that has lost structure. The Department's fourth aim of root canal treatment: "to make sure no bacteria from the mouth can leak back into the tooth, a large, well-sealed

restoration is put on the tooth. Teeth that require root canal treatment have sometimes lost a lot of tooth structure due to previous decay or cracks and may require further protection in the form of posts, crowns or other similar materials."

There is a cosmetic reason too: "A pulp-free tooth that is sealed with a filling rather than covered by a crown may eventually turn grey." A crown covers that; a filling does not.

After erosion has taken surface away. "If your teeth have had dental erosion, the lost surface of the tooth may need to be replaced with fillings or crowns." The Department also warns where untreated erosion leads: "The loss of tooth structure can require complex and lengthy dental treatment involving fillings, veneers, crowns and potentially root canal treatment."

As part of a bridge, which has its own consequences for neighbouring teeth. A bridge is "metal or ceramic crowns that are attached onto supporting teeth to replace one or more missing teeth". Its risks include that "bridges may involve removing a lot of healthy tooth structure on either side of the missing tooth. 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"; that "it can be very difficult to clean under the bridge. Tooth decay and gum disease around bridges can be very difficult to treat and in severe cases the supporting teeth may develop problems as a result"; and that "it is irreversible for the surrounding teeth; once a tooth is cut for a crown to support a bridge, it will always need a crown."

So choosing a bridge commits the teeth either side, not only the gap.

Where a crown sits on the published ladder. Resin composite is "glued (bonded) onto the tooth" with no irreversibility statement attached. A veneer requires that "a thin layer of tooth may be removed from the surface of the tooth". A crown requires removal "from the top and all around the tooth" and "will always need a crown". The further up, the more permanent.

What will not be solved by a crown. "Tooth decay, fillings, crowns, bridges, veneers, false teeth and some types of discolouration do not whiten." A crown's colour is set when it is made, so any whitening decision belongs before it, not after.

The prerequisite and the questions. "The first step is to make sure your teeth and mouth are in good health", and "treat any disease first. Your health is the priority." Before agreeing, the Department suggests asking: "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 and if payment options are available."; "Any possible side effects or complications."

And the ongoing commitment. "Most cosmetic dental treatment requires extra care at home to prevent tooth decay, gum disease or other problems. Cleaning the area well and having a healthy diet is essential." For a crowned tooth the margin at the gum line is exactly where that cleaning counts, and the Department's figure on what brushing alone misses — "up to a third of each tooth doesn't get cleaned" without floss or an interdental brush — applies there.

Sources: Better Health Channel (Victorian Department of Health), Cosmetic dentistry and teeth whitening, betterhealth.vic.gov.au (reviewed 12 December 2025); Root canal treatment, betterhealth.vic.gov.au (reviewed 14 July 2025); Dental erosion, betterhealth.vic.gov.au (reviewed 22 October 2025); Teeth and mouth care, betterhealth.vic.gov.au (reviewed 25 July 2025). All accessed 6 November 2026.

Frequently asked questions

Is a dental crown the same as a dental cap?

Yes. The two names mean the same thing. It is a fixed restoration that completely covers a tooth to protect it and restore its shape and appearance.

Does getting a crown hurt?

Your dentist will usually use local anaesthetic when preparing the tooth, so you should not feel pain during that step. Some tenderness afterwards is possible. Tell us about any discomfort so we can check the fit.

How many visits does a crown need?

A traditional crown usually needs at least two appointments, one to prepare the tooth and fit a temporary crown, and one to cement the permanent crown. Some clinics offer CEREC same-day crowns for suitable teeth.

Can a tooth with a crown still get decay?

Yes. The tooth underneath, and the edge where the crown meets the tooth, can still decay. Brushing, cleaning between your teeth and regular check-ups help to protect a crowned tooth.

Do I need a crown after root canal treatment?

Often a tooth that has had root canal treatment is weaker, so a crown may be recommended to protect it. Your dentist will assess the tooth and tell you whether one is suitable.

What is a dental crown?

The Victorian Department of Health: "A metal or ceramic shell that is placed over the entire tooth to fully cover the tooth." Its gapped-teeth page describes it as "a permanent type of tooth covering made of porcelain or metal or both that is used to cover, protect, restore and improve the shape and function of your teeth".

How is a crown different from a veneer?

A crown has a structural job. It "protects the tooth, which may have been weakened by large fillings or decay in the past", as well as changing colour and shape. A veneer's listed purposes are cosmetic, with no protective claim attached.

How much tooth is removed for a crown?

More than for a veneer. "A thin layer of tooth may be removed from the top and all around the tooth to make space for the material", against "from the surface of the tooth" for a veneer.

Is a crown reversible?

No, and the Department states it without qualification: "It is irreversible; once a tooth is cut for a crown, it will always need a crown."

Could preparing the tooth cause further problems?

It is a listed risk. "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."

How many appointments does a crown take?

Usually two. "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." Some clinics "have lab equipment on site and may be able to finish it on the day".

Will I get a temporary crown in between?

Yes — the Department describes it as standard: "a temporary crown will be provided".

Why would a crown be recommended after root canal treatment?

Two reasons in the published advice. Structurally, teeth needing root canal treatment "have sometimes lost a lot of tooth structure" and "may require further protection in the form of posts, crowns or other similar materials". Cosmetically, "a pulp-free tooth that is sealed with a filling rather than covered by a crown may eventually turn grey".

Can a crown be whitened later?

No. "Tooth decay, fillings, crowns, bridges, veneers, false teeth and some types of discolouration do not whiten", so any whitening decision belongs before the crown is made.

What if the crown is to support a bridge?

Then the commitment extends to the neighbouring teeth. Bridges "may involve removing a lot of healthy tooth structure on either side of the missing tooth", and "it is irreversible for the surrounding teeth; once a tooth is cut for a crown to support a bridge, it will always need a crown". The Department also warns that "it can be very difficult to clean under the bridge".

What should I ask before agreeing?

"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 and if payment options are available."; "Any possible side effects or complications."

How should I look after a crowned tooth?

The margin at the gum line is where it counts. The Department asks for "extra care at home to prevent tooth decay, gum disease or other problems", and notes that without floss or an interdental brush "up to a third of each tooth doesn't get cleaned".

Related services and further reading

Dental crowns

Dental bridges

Dental implants

Root canal therapy

What should I know about dental crowns?

Metal, metal and porcelain, and porcelain crowns

Difference between a crown and a porcelain filling

5 tips for a healthier smile

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, with Monday to Friday hours to 6.00pm and Saturday mornings.

We quote before treatment starts and offer interest-free payment plans.

Contact Core Dental

Phone	13 13 16
Booking	Online through your practice page, or call 13 13 16
Hours	Monday to Friday 8.00am to 6.00pm, Saturday mornings, Sunday closed

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. Seek advice from a qualified, AHPRA-registered practitioner before proceeding.

What does a dental crown do for a tooth?

A dental crown, or cap, is a fixed restoration that completely covers a tooth to protect it and restore its shape and appearance. Core Dental dentists assess whether a crown suits your tooth at an examination.

Why would a Core Dental dentist recommend a crown?

We may recommend a crown to protect a damaged or broken tooth, restore a tooth weakened by decay or wear, strengthen a tooth after root canal treatment, or cover a discoloured or misshapen tooth.

Can a crown replace a missing tooth at Core Dental?

Yes, when attached to a dental implant, a crown can replace the visible part of a missing tooth. Core Dental dentists assess your gums, bone and health first to see whether an implant is suitable.

How many appointments does a crown take at Core Dental?

A traditional crown usually needs at least two appointments, with a temporary crown worn while the laboratory makes the permanent one, often in one to two weeks. Some clinics offer CEREC same-day crowns.

Which Core Dental clinics offer CEREC same-day crowns?

CEREC same-day crowns are offered at Core Dental Epping, South Melbourne and Caroline Springs. Ask our team on 13 13 16 whether your tooth is suitable for a same-day crown.

How long can a dental crown last?

Longevity depends on the material, how well the crown is cared for and the wear on it. Many crowns last for years with regular check-ups, but they can chip, decay at the edges or come loose.

How do I book a crown assessment at Core Dental?

Call 13 13 16 or book online through coredental.com.au. Core Dental clinics are open Monday to Friday 8.00am to 6.00pm and Saturday mornings, and we quote before treatment starts.

Does Core Dental offer payment plans for crowns?

Yes. Core Dental offers interest-free payment plans through Payright (0% interest, fortnightly instalments, 3 to 30 months, plans up to $20,000, subject to eligibility). Confirm current terms with our team.