

What type of dental crown ("cap") should you have made?

Dental crowns (also known as "dental caps" or "tooth caps") can be made from metal (gold or other metal alloys), ceramic materials (such as porcelain), or a combination of both. The information on this page explains some of the advantages and disadvantages of each of these various types of dental crowns.

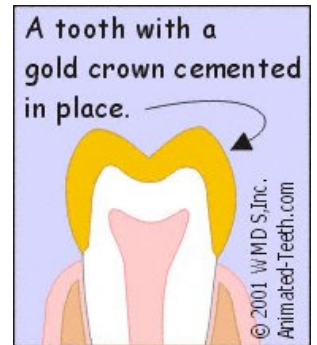
"Gold" dental crowns

Some dental crowns are made entirely of metal. The classic metal dental crown is one made of gold, or more precisely a gold alloy. Over the decades a variety of different metal alloys have been used in making dental crowns. Some of these metals are silver in color rather than yellow like gold.

Having a gold dental crown made can be an excellent choice. Here are some reasons why:

- Because of its physical properties, dentists find gold to be a very workable metal. This characteristic helps a dentist to be able to achieve a very precise fit with the crown.
- Since they are metal through and through, gold crowns withstand biting and chewing forces well. They will not chip. It would be uncharacteristic for a gold crown to break. Of all of the types of dental crowns, gold crowns probably have the greatest potential for lasting the longest.
- Although they are very strong, the wear rate of a gold crown is about the same as tooth enamel. This means that a gold dental crown won't create excessive wear on the teeth it opposes (the teeth it bites against).

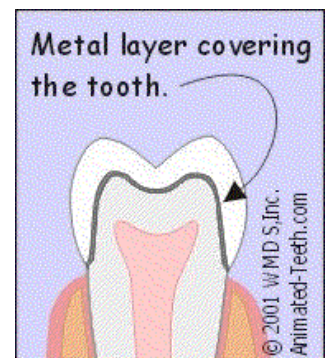
Metal dental crowns are usually placed on those teeth that are not overly visible when a person smiles (i.e., molars). If you are considering a gold crown take our advice on this point, before you give the go ahead on making the crown check with your spouse first. They're the one who will be looking at your smile and your new dental crown the most.



Dental crowns that will show prominently when you smile are usually made of porcelain (dental ceramic) or else will have a veneer of porcelain on their surface (i.e., porcelain-fused-to-metal crowns), so they have a white color like the rest of your teeth.

All-porcelain dental crowns.

Some dental crowns are fabricated in a manner where their full thickness is porcelain (dental ceramic). These crowns can possess a translucency that makes them the most cosmetically pleasing of all of the different types of dental crowns.



Although they can be very life like in appearance, the overall strength of all-porcelain dental crowns is less than other types of crowns. While they can be a good choice for front teeth, due to the hefty chewing and biting forces that humans can generate, all-porcelain dental crowns may not be the best choice for back teeth. Your dentist's judgement will be required on this point.

Porcelain-fused-to-metal dental crowns.

Porcelain-fused-to-metal dental crowns are somewhat of a hybrid between metal crowns and porcelain crowns. When they are made the dental technician first makes a shell of metal that fits over the tooth. A veneering of porcelain is then fused over this metal (in a high heat oven), giving the crown a white tooth-like appearance. Depending on the requirements of your situation, these crowns are sometimes made where the porcelain veneer only covers those aspects of the crown that is readily visible (meaning the other portions of the crown could have a metal surface). In other cases these crowns are pretty much fully surfaced with porcelain.

Porcelain-fused-to-metal dental crowns can be a good choice for either front or back teeth. These crowns are strong enough to withstand heavy biting pressures and at the same time can have an excellent cosmetic appearance. There are some disadvantages associated with porcelain-fused-to-metal crowns however. They are:

- While the cosmetic appearance of these crowns can be excellent, they often are not as pleasing aesthetically as all-porcelain dental crowns.
- The crown's porcelain can chip or break off.
- The porcelain surface of the crown can create wear (sometimes this wear is significant) on those teeth that it bites against.
- The metal that lies underneath a crown's porcelain layer can sometimes be visualized as a dark line found right at the crown's edge. A dentist will usually try to position this dark edge just underneath the tooth's gum line but if a person's gums recede this dark line can show, thus spoiling the crown's appearance.