

“Break” Those Bucking Dentures

Do you have one or both dentures that jump, jerk, skitter, and buck like a wild horse. Do you ever get so frustrated that you want to break them? Instead let's talk about how to “break”, or tame, them.

Some people try to tame a wild denture by using gobs of goo (denture adhesive). Denture adhesive is helpful for people learning to eat with dentures and some people will always feel more confident with a little adhesive. Using gobs of goo, however, is a very poor way to make a badly fitting denture more useful...and it's messy too.

Actually, how you use denture adhesive can tell you a lot about your dentures. If you don't need any adhesive, or if a powdered adhesive does the trick, then your denture probably still fits fairly well. If you have to use a lot of goopy type adhesive to fill in space under the denture, then your fit is likely poor. If you need a pad type adhesive, then your denture has probably not fit well for many years, if it ever did!

So how do we get a good fit with your dentures? First, you need a reasonably good quality denture to start with. There is a huge difference in the “qualities” of dentures. I see people every month that are trying to eat with dentures that are so bad that I don't know how they manage. Unfortunately, if you got cheap dentures, you probably got what you paid for. If so, or if your dentures are badly cracked or severely worn, you may need to consider new ones. As the saying goes, “You can't make a silk purse out of sow's ear.”

What can we do with dentures that fit well at one time, but no longer stay put? A reline, which is adding acrylic to readapt the underside of the denture, may be all you need. Ridge shrinkage, due to bone loss, occurs rapidly in the first 6 months following tooth removal and then continues more slowly forever. A denture inserted when the teeth came out needs to be relined in 6 months, and any denture needs to be relined every 3-5 years. This rule also applies to partials. Be aware that a poorly done reline can actually make things worse.

The ideal options to “break” wild dentures involve implants or the new mini- implants. These allow the dentures to actually snap into place and provide great stability, especially for lowers. The difference between even a well fitting lower denture and one stabilized with implants or mini- implants is “night and day”. In many cases, your existing denture can even be retrofitted to mini implants, with the whole procedure taking only about 2 hours. You can literally have the procedure done first thing in the morning and eat lunch with your stabilized denture!

If you're having problems with your dentures, please see a dentist who can offer you all of these solutions. You should be seeing a dentist once a year anyway for a denture check and an oral cancer exam. Oral cancer is very disfiguring, quite deadly, and far more common than most people realize. Your exam will hopefully result in options to chew better and may actually help you live longer!