

Your child's dental care – stainless steel crowns

This leaflet explains more about stainless steel crowns for your child, including the benefits, risks and any alternatives and what you and your child can expect when you come to hospital. If you have any further questions, please speak to the dentist caring for your child.

What is a stainless steel crown?

Stainless steel crowns can help to protect primary (baby) teeth. They are metal crowns that are made from stainless steel, and contain nickel and chrome. They are used to treat molars (back teeth) that have either decayed or not formed properly. The crowns are pre-made and come in a range of sizes. We will choose a stainless steel crown that will fit over your child's tooth and cover the entire crown of the tooth (the part that sits above the gum). We will then cement it in place.

Why does my child need a stainless steel crown?

A stainless steel crown is an alternative to taking out (extracting) a decayed and weak tooth. On large cavities in back molar teeth, they last longer than white or silver amalgam fillings. A crown will help to protect the tooth and keep a space in the mouth for the adult tooth to grow into. If the tooth has needed root canal treatment, often a stainless steel crown is the most appropriate type of filling.

What do they look like?

They are bright and metallic (see image on page 3). They are placed on back molar teeth so often are less noticeable than you might think. Children are usually pleased to have a shiny tooth rather than one with a hole in it.



Stainless steel crowns on back molar teeth

What happens during the treatment?

Treatment usually involves cleaning and shaping the tooth for the crown, before cementing the crown in place. This can be done while your child is awake (using local anaesthetic injections to numb the pain). This takes around 30 minutes. Alternatively, it can be done under general anaesthetic (with your child unconscious). In some cases (if a child is very anxious) a variation on the treatment can be used, involving no local anaesthetic or drilling of the tooth, just pushing the crown into place over the tooth.

What are the risks?

When preparing the tooth for the crown, we may discover that the decay is too much for the tooth to be saved. We will then need to remove the tooth rather than use a crown.

Are there any alternatives?

White fillings can also be used to fill holes in back teeth. However in large cavities they do not protect the tooth so well and do not last as

long. Therefore, they may not be suitable for very decayed and weak teeth.

How can my child prepare for stainless steel crown placement?

If your child is having a general anaesthetic please follow the separate guidance given about this. If the treatment is carried out under local anaesthetic, your child should eat and drink normally before the procedure and will be able to go back to school after the treatment.

Will my child feel any pain?

Using local anaesthetic should prevent pain during the procedure. After the treatment the crown can feel tight to begin with, so it is sensible to make sure you have paracetamol and/or ibuprofen at home if required.

What happens after the treatment and when my child goes home?

If we have used local anaesthetic, the mouth will be numb. You should make sure your child doesn't bite their lip, cheek or tongue, or drink or eat hot food or liquid while the numbness is present. The crown will feel tight on the tooth for the first couple of days. If you think your child needs it, provide painkillers such as paracetamol or ibuprofen. Speech and eating may be difficult at first. You may also notice that the crown appears 'high' in the bite, and your child may not be able to fully close their teeth together when it has first been put in. This usually settles within a few weeks.

How long do they last?

The crown should stay in place until the baby tooth falls out naturally (when the permanent tooth underneath is ready to come through). There are cases where the crown wears through on the biting surface and needs to be replaced. Occasionally, the tooth with the crown on may need to be extracted (taken out) before then.

How do I help my child look after the crown?

The crowns will behave like a normal tooth and your child should treat it like one. They should brush it twice a day along with the other teeth, and floss between the teeth as they normally would do.

Will my child have a follow-up appointment?

We will agree a course of treatment with you and your child, and the fitting of the stainless steel crown will be part of it. On completion of treatment, your child will be discharged back to your dentist. They should continue to provide regular checkups, and supportive preventative dental care throughout your child's time with us and also on discharge from our care.

Giving my consent (permission)

We want to involve you in decisions about your child's care and treatment. If you decide to go ahead, you will be asked to sign a consent form. This states that you agree for your child to have the treatment and you understand what it involves. If you would like more information about our consent process, please speak to a member of staff caring for your child.

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about stainless steel crowns, please contact the paediatric dental team on **020 7188 7188 ext 55262 / 54304** (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm).

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

To make comments or raise concerns about the Trust's services, please contact PALS. Ask a member of staff to direct you to the PALS office or:

t: 020 7188 8801

e: pals@gstt.nhs.uk

NHS 111

Offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available over the phone 24 hours a day.

t: 111

NHS Choices

Provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make choices about your health.

w: www.nhs.uk

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