

INLAY / ONLAY

Inlays and onlays are dental restorations that cover back teeth. The difference between an inlay and an onlay is that an inlay covers a small part of the biting surface of a back tooth while an onlay extends over the biting surface and onto other parts of the tooth. Both of these restorations are cemented into place and cannot be taken off.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What materials are in an Inlay/Onlay?

Inlays are made of three types of materials:

- Porcelain/Ceramic - most like a natural tooth in color
- Gold Alloy – more resistant to chipping than porcelain.
- Composite/Hybrid –like natural tooth in color

2. What are the benefits of having an Inlay/Onlay?

Inlays and Onlays restore a tooth to its natural size and shape.

- They restore the strength and function of a tooth and esthetics are enhanced when using tooth colored materials.
- An Inlay/Onlay presents less risk of fracture and breakage of the tooth than a filling
- Future risk for a root canal may be less than with a full coverage crown

3. What are the risks of having an Inlay/Onlay?

- Preparation for an Inlay/Onlay permanently alters the tooth underneath the restoration.
- Preparing for and placing an Inlay/Onlay can irritate the tooth and cause “post-operative” sensitivity which may last up to 3 months.
- Crowns, Inlays and Onlays may need root canal treatment about 5% of the time during the lifetime of the tooth.
- If the cement seal at the edge of the Inlay/Onlay is lost, decay may form at the junction of the restoration and tooth.
- Porcelain may chip and metal may wear over time. If the tooth needs a root canal treatment after the Inlay/Onlay is permanently cemented, the procedure may fracture the restoration and the Inlay/Onlay may need to be replaced.

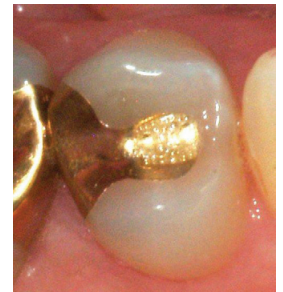
4. What are the alternatives to Inlays/Onlays?

Alternatives to placing an Inlay/Onlay are to place a crown, a tooth colored filling, or a silver filling.

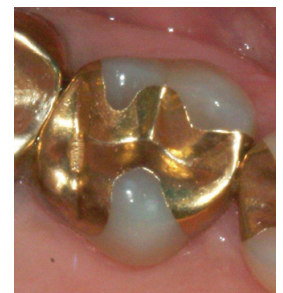
- Crowns may require more tooth reduction in their preparation and therefore weaken remaining tooth structure more than Inlays/Onlays.
- Tooth colored or silver fillings remove decay and may restore teeth to their original shape but are limited because they:
 - Do not improve the strength of broken down teeth.
 - Do not improve the long term function and aesthetics of broken down teeth as well as Inlays/Onlays.

5. Are there any post-treatment limitations once I have an Inlay/Onlay?

- A tooth colored Inlay/Onlay may chip or break if used for abnormal activities other than normal chewing.
- A gold Inlay/Onlay may wear over years of use.



Gold Inlays



Gold Onlays



Silver fillings replaced by porcelain Inlays/Onlays