

Porcelain Indirect Restorations

Indirect restorations on biting surfaces

When the biting surface of a back tooth needs a restoration, an excellent choice is often a porcelain inlay or onlay.

Inlays and onlays are called “indirect restorations” because they are fabricated outside of the tooth, and then placed on the tooth in a separate step.

Choosing between inlays and onlays

We’ll choose between an inlay and an onlay depending on how much of your tooth structure has been lost. An inlay fits within the grooves of the tooth’s biting surface, like a filling, while an onlay also covers one or more cusps of the tooth.

Both kinds of restorations are precision-crafted in a dental laboratory, so it may take two or more appointments to restore your tooth with a porcelain inlay or onlay.



Porcelain onlay on model



Porcelain inlay



Porcelain inlay

Placing a porcelain inlay or onlay

On your first visit, we numb the area to make you comfortable. We may also use a rubber dam to protect your mouth and the back of your throat while we work.

Using the handpiece, we remove any decay and shape the tooth, so it will securely hold the restoration. Next we take an impression of your teeth. The dental lab uses this impression to make an accurate model of your mouth, and then they use the model to create an inlay or onlay that precisely fits your tooth and bite. In the meantime, we often place a temporary restoration to protect your tooth.

On your next visit, we remove the temporary restoration and try in your new porcelain restoration. We check the fit, and when everything is right, we bond or cement the porcelain inlay or onlay in place.

The benefits of porcelain inlays and onlays

A porcelain restoration has several benefits. Like all restorations, it protects your tooth. But in addition, a porcelain inlay or onlay is—

- ❖ strong and durable.
- ❖ translucent and colored like natural teeth.