

## **Long Term Effects of a Missing Tooth**

### **Drifting of teeth**

Although teeth are firmly attached to the jaw bone, the risk of drifting of teeth is significantly increased by having a gap or gaps in the mouth. These gaps create vast spaces into which the adjacent teeth can move, thus creating more space for other teeth to shift and, in a domino effect, the entire bite can be affected in the long term.

### **Bite Irregularities**

By definition, when we lose a tooth, the ability to chew is significantly altered in that particular area of the mouth. When a tooth is lost, the teeth adjacent to the gap are immediately put under extra load, as they no longer have the ability to spread the load along a full set of teeth. This can lead to increase wear and tear within these teeth (and in turn failure). Additionally, the changes to the bite can lead to a variety of issues, for example headaches, muscle pain, sensitivity and jaw pain.

### **Difficulty chewing**

We see a lot of patients with missing molars (back teeth). These teeth play a crucial role in grinding up and chewing food. Therefore, when we lose these particular teeth, the manner in which we chew food is impacted. Failure to chew our food adequately can impact digestion, resulting in issues such as acid/gastric reflux).

### **Facial Aesthetics**

Teeth help support the shape and structure of the face. Losing a tooth leads to a gap in between teeth which can lead to the soft tissues i.e., the cheek to look aged and sunken. Additionally, the bone in the jaw where the tooth used to be is no longer stimulated by chewing and can resorb/degenerate over time which can enhance this effect.

### **Speech Issues**

Missing teeth can make it difficult to pronounce words and patients report slurring, whistling or even spitting when speaking.