

Could Implants Help Miss America?

ask her dentist

by: Dr. Bosler

Did you know that Miss America 2008, Kirsten Haglund, is missing a front tooth? She popped it out for the TV cameras in a cute way that only a beauty queen could do. Most of the rest of us might not look so cute with a frontal gap. We would prefer a more permanent, natural looking tooth that doesn't come out at night - one that you brush in your mouth.

Dental implants are frequently the best treatment option for replacing missing teeth. Rather than resting on the gum line like removable dentures, or using adjacent teeth as anchors like fixed bridges, dental implants are long-term artificial roots that are surgically placed in the jawbone.

A Better Choice for Replacing Missing Teeth

Statistics show that 69% of adults ages 35 to 44 have lost at least one permanent tooth to an accident, gum disease, a failed root canal or tooth decay. Furthermore, by age 74, 26% of adults have lost all of their permanent teeth.

Twenty years ago, these patients would have had no alternative but to ask their dentist to make them a fixed bridge or dentures to restore their ability to eat, speak clearly and smile. Fixed bridges and removable dentures, however, are not the perfect solution and often bring with them a number of other problems. Removable dentures may slip or cause embarrassing clicking sounds while eating or speaking. Of even greater concern, fixed bridges often affect adjacent healthy teeth, and removable dentures may lead to bone loss in the area where the tooth or teeth are missing. Recurrent decay, periodontal (gum) disease and other factors often doom fixed bridgework to early failure. For these reasons, fixed bridges and removable dentures usually need to be replaced every seven to fifteen years.

Today, the implant option is available for most patients who are missing permanent teeth. Dental implants are long-term replacements that are surgically placed in the jawbone. Composed of titanium metal that "fuses" with the jawbone through a process called "osseointegration," dental implants never slip or make embarrassing noises that advertise the fact that you have "false teeth," and never decay like teeth anchoring fixed bridges. Because dental implants fuse with the jawbone, bone loss is generally not a problem.

After more than 20 years of service, the vast majority of dental implants continue to still function at peak performance. More importantly, the recipients of those early dental implants are still satisfied they made the right choice. If properly cared for, dental implants can last a lifetime!

"I Eat Whatever I Want Now"

Marie has worn dentures for over 40 years. "They just don't fit like they used to when I was younger - especially the lower

plate. It pops up whenever I open up my mouth wide. Forget biting into an apple. I have to cut it up in pieces." Marie was told in the past by her dentist that nothing could be done for her because the passage of time had caused extensive resorption of her lower jaw bone. "It got to the point that I only put my lower plate in to go to church and to the mall. It was easier to eat without them than with them in!" At the encouragement of her close friend, Marie received just two implants in her lower jaw which made all the difference for her. "I eat whatever I want now without fear of my teeth flopping around. It's a new freedom I haven't enjoyed in years - and I no longer have to mess with the denture glue!"

Dental Implants vs. Conventional Dentures

Many patients who have selected dental implants describe a quality of life that is much more comfortable and secure than the lifestyle endured by those with fixed bridges or removable dentures. Dentures often make a person feel and look older than they are, cause embarrassment in social situations when they slip and click, and restrict the everyday pleasure of eating comfortably.

When they count the benefits they enjoy as a result of their dental implants, patients say their implants eliminate the day-to-day frustrations and discomfort of ill-fitting dentures. They allow people to enjoy a healthy and varied diet without the restrictions many denture wearers face. With a sense of renewed self-confidence, many people rediscover the excitement of an active lifestyle shared with family and friends and the chance to speak clearly and comfortably with co-workers. For all these reasons, people with dental implants often say they feel better... they look better... they live better.

Dental Implants Can Change Your Life

Whether you are a young, middle-aged or older adult; whether you need to replace one tooth, several teeth, or all your teeth, there is a dental implant solution for you. With an overall success rate of about 95% and almost 50 years of clinical research to back them up, dental implants are frequently the best treatment option for replacing missing teeth.

Your family dentist can help you with the right decision for your smile and self confidence. Imagine yourself with a full, beautiful smile-without any embarrassing gaps. If you wear dentures, imagine the freedom that implants will give you. It's like having your natural, beautiful teeth back! ■

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