



Dental Implants Role in Total Health Dentistry



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By Dr. Ivy Batos

No one ever dislikes an attractive smile. No one ever dislikes being able to chew their food well and eat a variety of foods they enjoy. Dental implants make all these qualities possible.

In the past, people who lost teeth had two options—wearing removable teeth (dentures and partial dentures) or altering other teeth to support replacements, as in fixed bridges. With bridges, healthy teeth are shaved down to act as anchors for multiple replacement teeth. These anchor teeth, called abutments, now have added stress placed on them as they support false replacement

teeth. People now have a third option, dental implants, which allow someone who has lost a tooth (or teeth) to get the most natural replacement possible.

Dental implants are small titanium posts which are placed into the site of missing teeth. They anchor into the replacement site and become a nonremovable part of the jaw, allowing the patient to have replacement teeth made which look and feel like the teeth they lost. They also allow a denture wearer to secure their removable denture with tremendously increased stability.

What are the benefits of dental implants? Most importantly, dental implants never decay. Because they are made of pure titanium, they are resistant to tooth decay, a common reason people lose teeth in the first place. Patients will often ask, "If I get a bridge made because my teeth decayed, what will stop new decay from forming beneath my new bridge?" The answer: Nothing. New cavities can form and cause a bridge to fail in a person prone to tooth decay. For patients who have experienced a great number of cavities, a dental implant is a superior tooth replacement because it is resistant to decay. This is especially important in older people, and those who take a lot of medication. Age and medication can decrease the flow of saliva in the mouth, making us much more prone to tooth decay.

Dental implants also give you the feel of natural teeth. Because a dental implant is made to act like the root of a tooth, it is placed beneath the gum line. A dentist makes a "crown", the part of the tooth

"Do you look forward to going the dentist? Is it a pleasant experience? If you answered no to either question, may I suggest you join the happy family at Dr. Diane Nogalo's office? I cannot explain how wonderful you feel interfacing with Dr. Nogalo and her professional and competent staff. I now smile a lot and so will you, I promise."

Shirley A. Wuicik

that we see above the gum line that attaches to the dental implant and creates a beautiful, lifelike tooth replacement. The shape and shade are picked to be natural in appearance, matching the other teeth in the mouth. Dental implants that replace a single tooth do not have to attach to any other teeth, allowing patients to floss between their teeth and practice

their usual oral hygiene.

One thing that many people don't realize is that when a tooth is lost, the socket around the tooth dissolves away, leading to a loss of bone support in the jaw. Dental implants, because they anchor into the jaw, preserve the support of the bone and facial structures, preventing the continual atrophy that can occur with age. This is extremely important for the jaw of someone who has a denture. With continued use, a denture rubs against the gums and underlying jawbone, wearing away the jawbone little by little until a great volume of bone is lost. This is why people with a denture often have a sunken look to their face when their dentures are not in place. Dental implants prevent this continual loss of the volume of the jaw. When dental implants are placed, a denture can be made to "snap on" to the implant, making the denture secure and stable. Dental implant patients then no longer have to use sticky adhesives, nor do they experience the sores that come from the denture rubbing on their gums.

Most people don't realize

what it is like to not be able to chew on one side of their mouth until they lose a tooth. Dentists commonly hear patients say "I don't chew on my right side (or left side) because a molar is missing". As we all age, nutrition is more and more important, and the ability to eat a variety of healthy foods is paramount. As children, we tend to be able to eat whatever we want, with few consequences. As we age, however, eating healthy foods in a variety of forms ensures we receive the nutrition we need for healthy aging and the maintenance of our bodies in adulthood. Being unable to eat the chewy, fibrous foods that are needed to ensure adequate nutrition has negative consequences on our body's total health. Replacing missing teeth with dental implants makes this process easier.

Dental implants represent the standard of care in replacing a missing tooth. They also provide an increased quality of life for patients who wear dentures. They reduce the loss of bone in the jaw following tooth loss and help maintain normal facial bone support. Thousands of dental implants are placed for patients each year, with extremely high safety and success rates. Ask your dentist or periodontist how dental implants can help you achieve a beautiful, healthy and stable smile.

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Dr. Ivy Batos is a periodontist in Willoughby. Her practice is devoted to the replacement of teeth with dental implants, as well as the prevention and treatment of periodontal disease and temporomandibular joint (TMJ) disorders. Dr. Batos is a graduate of Cornell University and received her dental degree and residency training in periodontics at The University of Pennsylvania. She loves helping patients gain a healthy smile as well as achieve the positive effects of good dental health on the body's total health and wellness. Dr. Batos and her husband are the parents of two young sons. Please call 440-954-8300 for additional information.