

Dentures and Implants

There are many patients who ask “Would it just be easier to take them all out and get dentures?” While this question is very patient specific, in most cases the answer is no. Any teeth, even those with severe problems, are still better than not having any teeth. In most cases we can provide comprehensive dental treatment to fix your teeth and with regular follow up care and good brushing, flossing and dietary habits you can keep your teeth for as long as you live. For those that already have dentures or those who come to the office with teeth in such bad conditions that there is no other viable or affordable options, dentures may be the only option. Fortunately for this group of people we now have the option to anchor these dentures with implants which greatly increase patient satisfaction and confidence and help the denture function more like natural teeth.

Dentures are an adequate replacement for no teeth but most people are never satisfied with their dentures. Complete dentures should be the last resort. Dentures are made of plastic and fall short of restoring the function we have with natural teeth. Dentures are only able to withstand 15% of the force normally used when chewing foods with natural teeth. Chewing forces above 15% can cause discomfort and cause the upper denture to lose suction and fall. Lower dentures have no suction and simply float on the bottom and are held in place by gravity and muscles. Many people have trouble adapting to the lower denture and often do not wear it except for when they go out in public. Implant supported dentures have been shown to restore up to 60% of the normal chewing forces.

When dentures are first placed they fit snug and there is little change to your facial appearance. However as soon as our teeth are removed from the mouth the bone in our jaws starts to resorb or erode away. Our jawbone exists to support our teeth and without teeth they start to disappear. This accelerates the process of looking old as the facial bones start to collapse. New dentures are needed every 5 to 7 years due to the process of resorption of bone. Each time a denture is made it is less retentive and bulkier to replace the volume of missing bone. Fortunately we can now place dental implants which take the place of your missing teeth and help to preserve the ridge or the jawbone.

An implant-supported denture is a type of denture that is supported by and attached to implants. An implant-supported denture has special attachments that snap onto attachments on the implants. Implant-supported dentures usually are made for the lower jaw because regular dentures tend to be less stable there. The main advantage of implants in the either jaw is to preserve bone and gain additional stability and chewing force. Implant-supported dentures can be fabricated for the upper or lower jaw.

There are two types of implant-supported dentures: bar-retained and ball-retained. In both cases, the denture will be made of an acrylic base that will look like gums, with acrylic teeth that look like natural teeth attached. Bar-retained dentures require at least three implants. Ball-retained dentures need at least two. Bar-retained dentures consist of a thin metal bar that follows the curve of your jaw and is attached to two to five implants that have been placed in your jawbone. Clips or other types of attachments are fitted to the bar the denture, or to both. The denture fits over the bar and is securely clipped into place by the attachments. With ball-retained dentures (stud-attachment dentures) each implant that has been placed in the jawbone holds a metal attachment that fits into another attachment on the denture. In most cases, the attachments on the implants are ball-shaped ("male" attachments), and they fit into sockets ("female" attachments) on the denture. In some cases, these attachments are reversed, with the denture holding the male attachments and the implants holding the female ones.

Implant-supported dentures will be more stable than a regular denture. You will find it easier to speak and you won't have to worry about the denture becoming loose or falling out of your mouth. You generally will be able to eat foods you could not eat before. They preserve bone and restore confidence in your teeth.

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