

“Would it just be better to pull out all my teeth and get a denture?”

We have had many people ask “Would it just be better to pull out all my teeth and get a denture?” While this question is very patient specific, in most cases the answer is no. Many people mistakenly believe that if they get rid of their teeth they will have no more problems to deal with in the mouth. While getting rid of all your teeth may mean never having to get a filling again there are many problems which arise and can leave you wishing you had teeth again.

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.

While dentures are a replacement for no teeth they are not a replacement for actual teeth. They are made of plastic and are relatively bulky compare to having teeth. Dentures only restore approximately 15% of the function provided by your natural teeth. Especially as it pertains to the lower dentures complaints include: it hurts to eat and I cannot taste food normally anymore and I can't speak or laugh without worrying that my denture will flop about or even fall out. Because of the way dentures function people with dentures are unable to bite into an apple or take bites of food with their front teeth.

Even dentures which are well made become loose over time. When we lose our teeth the bone supporting those teeth starts to resorb or disappear. As bone is lost the denture starts to become loose. New dentures are needed every 5-7 years depending on the rate of bone lose. Each replacement denture becomes larger in size to replace the missing bone and getting a good fit becomes more difficult. Eventually there is not enough bone to support or keep the denture in place.

Implants have emerged as the ideal way to anchor dentures and provide stability and support. Implants are titanium screws shaped like a tooth root which is placed into the jaw bone. An implant-supported denture has special attachments that snap onto the implants. Implant supported dentures have been shown to restore up to 60% of the normal chewing forces. Because an implant acts as a natural tooth root they help to preserve the bone and prevent bone loss.

There are two types of implant-supported dentures: bar-retained and ball-retained. 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. This allows the upper denture to be made without plastic covering the palate or the roof of your mouth. With ball-retained dentures each implant that has been placed in the jawbone holds a metal attachment that clips into another attachment on the denture.

Implant-supported dentures will be more stable than a regular denture because they clip onto the implants which are anchored in the bone. 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 and your ability to talk, smile and enjoy eating.

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