

Preserving What God Gave You...

Each and every day the practice of dentistry gets more fun. The art and science of preserving and replacing teeth is improving at a rapid pace. That pace keeps dentistry interesting, as there are a constant flow of new procedures, methods, and techniques to learn and apply. In today's world, fixing teeth should never get boring.

As of now, the cutting edge in replacing a single missing tooth is a titanium tooth root, commonly called a dental implant. After healing, these titanium roots can be used to support single teeth (crowns) or to snap in multiple teeth (partials or dentures.) An added bonus is that the actual surgery to have an implant or implants placed is virtually pain free.

There are many factors that determine whether a patient and their jaw are good candidates for dental implants. One of the most important factors is how much bone is available to support a titanium tooth root. Current techniques allow us to place all kinds of bone grafts to grow new bone. If you have the time, patience and money, almost any site missing a tooth can eventually receive a dental implant. Fortunately, there is a way to keep the time and expense to a minimum.

The best way to have enough bone to receive a dental implant is to never lose the bone in the first place. Studies show that forty to sixty percent of the bone supporting a tooth can be lost after a tooth is removed or extracted. This bone loss is what leads to more complicated implant procedures in order to re-grow new bone. Proper planning is a key to implant success.

When a tooth is removed, there remains a hole in the bone where the tooth root used to live. If left to heal alone, this site heals slowly and never grows bone back to the original height. Sometimes, an empty socket can cave in, causing a noticeable depression where the tooth root once was and lead to wrinkles in the face where bone support was lost.

Today, we have a simple procedure to prevent the loss of bone after a tooth is extracted called ridge preservation or socket grafting. After a broken tooth is removed, the hole left behind can be filled with bone and stitched shut. This five minute procedure reduces bleeding, speeds healing, and maintains the bone where the tooth was lost. Socket grafting helps to maintain the best bone you could get for future dentistry...your own.

If the day comes where a tooth might be lost, make sure to ask if ridge preservation is right for you. A little planning now can give you a lot more options down the line.

-Please send comments to Drs. Parrish through www.ParrishDental.com.