

## To Grow A Tooth...

I remember a series of books from my elementary school days that were about each one of the old time movie monsters, Dracula, Frankenstein, Werewolf, etc. They had bright orange covers outlining black and white movie stills. The print was angled and arched and looked like lightning. Our weekly "library" days often morphed into a foot race to see who could get to their favorite monster book first. I cannot recall the most popular pick, but I do remember that the Mad Scientist version was one of my personal favorites. Fortunately, my many attempts to grow my own monster in the garage never got off the ground. All I really did was torture a few bugs and learn what a nine volt battery feels like on the tip of your tongue.

Someday my childhood dreams may become a reality, minus the evil laugh and bad intentions. Recently, scientists have discovered a way to grow new teeth from a combination of mineral scaffolding and stem cells. I imagine this bit of research has a long road to travel until it becomes practical, but it is interesting nonetheless. In the future, we might be able to grow new teeth.

Fifty years ago, dental implants were considered "experimental" and did not enjoy today's high success rates. I've even been told that so many implants failed that most dentists refused to even consider them. Today, dental implants are often the treatment of choice for single missing teeth, multiple missing teeth, and a variety of other applications. Implants can "snap" dentures and partial plates into place, as well as provide anchorage for moving teeth around (braces). What was once a "risky" procedure is now a common practice that improves the lives of many patients.

Fifty years from now, implants and dentures may be a thing of the past. We may have the technology to develop a new tooth or a full set of teeth after they have been lost. Titanium is nice for now, but I hope that someday I get to grow someone a new tooth.

Plus, all those grasshoppers and caterpillars won't have been sacrificed in vain.

Until next week, keep smiling.

-Please send comments to Drs. Parrish at [www.ParrishDental.com](http://www.ParrishDental.com).