

Teeth in a Day

Imagine having to lose a tooth. There is little question that today, the best option to replace a lost tooth is a dental implant. For many years, though, it would not be uncommon for months to pass by before the implant could support a replacement tooth. During this waiting period, it has been typical to use a denture to cosmetically replace the missing tooth. Now imagine going to dentist to have a tooth removed and leaving the office with a dental implant and permanent replacement the same day. Today this is possible.

Implants have changed tremendously

There is no doubt that dental implants have revolutionized the way in which we as dentists recommend and provide treatment. We are no longer forced into using removable dentures or grinding down healthy teeth just to support replacement teeth. Historically, the modern-day dental implant dates back more than 40 years. In the infancy of implant dentistry, specific protocols were proposed that required fairly long healing periods in which the implant could not be stressed. The process from implant placement to having permanent replacement teeth would often take more than six months. Today we can provide dental implants with replacement teeth all *in the same day*.

The healing process is accelerated

Technology has made a tremendous impact on implant dentistry. The dental implant that we use today is not the same implant used 40 years ago. There has been a great body of research into the healing phenomenon of bone and what can be done to accelerate the healing process. In fact, the implants that I use today are modified in a manner that have been shown to decrease the healing time from months to days, in an experimental model. This translates into shorter healing periods for the patient.

Another technology that has changed the surgical process is digital imaging. Computer-aided

tomography (or CT scans) have been available in medicine for years. This type of X-ray allows physicians to view the internal components and organs of the body in three dimensions. We use the same type of X-ray in implant dentistry. Traditionally, this scan is often ordered prior to dental implant placement to determine if there is enough bone to allow placement.

Taking technology a step further

Today, technology has taken the usefulness of the CT scan one step further. I can get the data from the CT scanner on a disk, and by using a software program in my office, I can plan the entire implant surgery in advance. I can place dental implants exactly into perfect position within a reconstructed, three-dimensional image. This preplanned image is then used to create a placement guide that will exactly allow the placement of the implants on the day of surgery. It is a type of CT-guided surgery.

Using these technologies has allowed us to make dental implant procedures easier for you, the patient. First, with CT-guided surgery we can be less invasive. In fact, these implants can be placed without an incision and without stitches. Second, the planning software allows us to have replacement teeth fabricated before the implant surgery has even occurred so that you can leave with teeth the same day. Finally, with accelerated healing through bio-modification of the implant, we can feel comfortable that the “teeth in a day” procedure will not compromise the healing and long-term stability of the implant.

Teeth in a day: Explore your options

Teeth in a day is not for everyone – both from the patient’s and dentist’s perspective. A full dental assessment is required to determine eligibility for the patient. In addition, a very high level of skill and understanding of implant dentistry is required by both the implant surgeon and the restoring dentist. So do your homework to make sure this is the right procedure for you. 

PHOTO: THOMAS BALSAMO



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