

Is it too late for me to replace my lost teeth?

Ideally, if you lose a tooth you try to replace it right away. Unfortunately, this is not always possible. Sometimes, your budget or your life just doesn't have room in it for replacing your teeth. The problem is that when it is a more favorable financial situation, it may in some ways be too late for a simple dental implant to be placed. This can be due to teeth crowding into the space left by the missing tooth, making it too tight for the dental implant, or the deterioration of the jaw bone in this area because of no tooth being present. Does this mean that you are no longer a candidate to have your tooth or teeth replaced? Thankfully, this

is not the case and we still have options for you.

When replacing lost teeth, you typically have 3 options:

- 1) A dental implant this is a free standing artificial tooth
- 2) A fixed dental bridge-capping teeth on both sides of the open space with a false tooth in between
- 3) A removable partial or full denture

For purposes of this discussion, we will discuss the first two options.



Dental Implants

Thankfully, as a result of 3D Cone Beam X-rays, we are able to view your entire upper and lower jaws in all three dimensions. We are then able to determine exactly how much bone is present and if the actual quality of the bone will support a dental implant. This technology, that has only been available in the past few years, has completely changed implant dentistry for the better. We can now virtually place an implant on the computer prior to the patient even being in the chair. We can then make a computerized surgical guide that allows us to place the dental implant precisely in the virtually planned position without the worries of past "exploratory"

surgeries. It has made implant dentistry faster, more predictable, and less invasive for all of our patients. More importantly, we are able to provide tooth replacements for patients that were previously told that they were not able to have this procedure.

Advantages of Dental Implants

- Esthetic, functional, predictable, reliable
- Does not affect adjacent teeth
- Does not decay
- Less likely to develop gum disease
- More economical long term
- Average lifespan 25 years

Disadvantages of Dental Implants

- More expensive up-front cost
- Requires minor surgery
- More planning time

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Requires healing time before tooth replacement

Unfortunately, some people still are just not favorable candidates for dental implants, and a dental bridge is a more ideal solution to their problem.

Dental Bridges

A fixed bridge is permanently cemented into place and can only removed by your dentist. It consists of one or more false teeth called "pontics" (one for each missing tooth) in the middle and one or more anchoring crowns called "abutment" teeth on either side (see diagram). The pontics fill in the gap while the abutment teeth are secured to the natural teeth adjacent to the gap, holding the bridge in place.

To connect the bridge to the neighboring natural teeth, the natural teeth must be shaved/filed down in order to provide space for the crowns to correctly align with opposing teeth and enough surface area to enable a strong bond/connection. The natural teeth must be relatively healthy (structurally sound and free from decay) for this to work. The biggest downside to this process is that it is irreversible. Once the natural teeth are modified, they cannot be used as regular teeth ever again.

Advantages of Bridges

- Esthetic, functional, predictable, reliable
- Less costly upfront
- Requires less time for final result

Disadvantages of Bridges

- Requires enamel removal of adjacent teeth
- If adjacent teeth have crowns, they must be redone
- Tooth decay is potential problem
- Root canal treatment may be required if nerves are affected
- Average lifespan 11 years

I have seen many patients over the years that have given up hope on replacing lost teeth because they are unaware of the changes in dental materials and technology that allows

us so many other options these days. Even if you have been told that you were not a candidate for a dental implant or bridge, you should consider revisiting this idea with your dentist or another dentist that focuses on this type of dentistry. Giving people back their proper function, aesthetics,

and quality of life is one of the most fulfilling things a dentist can do...give them the chance to offer this to you.

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Dentally Speaking by Jeffrey S. Haddad D.D.S.

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Refreshments and hors d'oeuvres to be served
Doctors will be available for Q&A afterwards

In everyone's life, at some time, our inner fire goes out. It is then burst into flame by an encounter with another human being. We should all be thankful for those people who rekindle the inner spirit. ~Albert Schweitzer