

# Is it Possible to Replace Damaged Teeth in a Single Dentist Visit?

Amazingly, the answer is yes! A properly trained implant dentist can immediately replace one tooth, or even an entire arch of teeth that are too damaged to restore. Yet like most things that sound too good to be true, it is not possible in every instance.



By Kurt A. Doolin, D.D.S.

In implant dentistry, we have used bone grafting to rebuild lost structure before placing the actual implant. This is because when teeth are lost, the supporting bony structure begins to shrink away during and long after the healing process. This leaves a space in the jaw where there is not enough bone to place the implant.

Teeth are lost mainly due to decay, periodontal disease and trauma. Placing an implant at the time the tooth is lost gives us a jump on the bone loss and can prevent it. Using 3D imaging techniques, we can see the entire area where we intend to place an implant and know with great accuracy if we can place the implant and how much bone

grafting will be required, if any. After the placement, we can use magnetic resonance instruments to assess the stability of that implant to help us decide if we can place a tooth on it that same day. All this amazing technology gives us the knowledge we need to tell our patients what we expect to happen during their appointment. Without it, we're guessing. Not a good idea when someone is about to go through the emotional stress of losing a tooth.

Replacing an entire arch of teeth requires even more reliance on digital technology. We can now merge 3D CT scanning with 3D surface scanning and digital smile design to plan the actual surgical process alongside the restorative dentistry and esthetics. This allows our patients to see with great accuracy what they should expect their teeth to look like after the procedure. The entire process is driven by the patient's facial form, esthetic desires and the physical structure of their jaws. No guessing.

However, the teeth placed on these immediate implants are rarely the final restorations. Those are placed in the coming weeks or months after the mouth

has had time to heal completely. These provisional restorations placed at the time of surgery look, feel and function nearly the same as the permanent ones. This gives the restoring dentist an opportunity to make any changes that might be desired at that time.

These state-of-the-art procedures need to be done by



Patient Diana. "Teeth in a day."

trained and experienced professionals. They are often done by a team of doctors who do either the surgical or restorative part of the process. They can also be done by

a doctor who is trained in both phases of treatment.

These amazing techniques have given patients increased comfort, function, esthetics and long-term predictability more than ever before.

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## 'If not now, then when?'

This question resides on my office wall as a framed print, a reminder of a dear friend who often asks this of me when seeing me hesitate to buy a coveted item. Yes, it resonates when I want something, and it brings to mind so much more. If I don't understand or become the person I want to be now that I'm past the senior discount age, when will it ever happen?

Our busy early lives, full and rich with the possibilities of youth, bring some sense of accomplishment if we're fortunate and purposeful. Our many accomplishments and responsibilities may have defined our self-worth. Yet how often do we reflect back on where the years have gone? Before we know it, we've mindlessly reached the senior years when, if we're fortunate, we



have permission to coast and enjoy the fruits of our labors.

"Being" as opposed to "doing" becomes more relevant as birthdays accumulate. Having spent many years in the service of "doing" for others, whether bosses or chil-

dren or spouses or friends or parents or siblings, we find ourselves in a position of wondering "What now?". Without clear-cut goals and packed calendars to live by, feeling a bit adrift is natural. "Who am I?" becomes a question to ponder in this new stage of living.

Redefining oneself can be fraught with anxiety and challenge. Much like entering adulthood, the possibilities seem endless with unknown outcomes. Will volunteering be enriching? Is a part-time job worth

taking to provide some extra dollars for that long-desired sports car? Should my social life revolve around a senior center? What about offering to help more with babysitting the grandchildren? So much time now!

I encourage you to take some of that time to simply be. Sit with yourself quietly, breathe, and let the thoughts and emotions flow without trying to change them. Live fully in the present moment as much as possible....the past is gone, the future is yet to be. Paying attention to thoughts, emotions, and physical sensations can open up pathways in the mind, heart, and body that have become overgrown in the "doing" years. Wade through the tall grass with curiosity and a sense of discovery.

NOW is your time. If not now, then when?

Courtesy of Jan Miller, LPC, Mindful Living, Downtown Rochester. 248-736-3755, janmiller@mindfulliving.com.