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Brighter Smiles

DENTAL IMPLANTS (PART 2)

Last week I gave an introduction to the art of dental implantology. This week I will discuss who should consider and is a candidate for dental implants, what to expect, and what the risks are associated with this procedure.

Dental implants should be considered by patients who have lost one or more of their natural teeth. Most people who have lost teeth can have successful implants.

The ideal candidate must have healthy gums and sufficient underlying bone. In addition, that person must have good general health. Age is generally not a factor. Young people with congenitally missing teeth must wait until they have stopped growing, but pretty much anyone else is a candidate.

The dental implant procedure has come a long way, even over the last 10 years. The success rate is in the 90's%.

After the dental implants are placed, there is often a period of 3-6 months before teeth can be attached. This allows time for the implant to actually integrate and become part of the jawbone. More recently, there are indications in which teeth can be put on implants at the same time the implants are placed. This is a decision made by the dental team before they are placed.

Although there is always some level of risk associated with any surgical procedure, there are usually no major long-lasting negative effects of dental implant surgery. In fact, in most instances, having a dental implant placed is easier than having a tooth removed. The two major risk factors are sinus involvement with upper implants and nerve damage with lower implants. However, these incidences should be low with proper planning. In the rare event that an implant is rejected by the body, in most cases, another implant can be placed successfully.

The body, and especially the mouth, has an amazing recovery and healing period. Although there are chances for short-term swelling and/or minor to moderate discomfort, most patients are back to work the next day.

The length of time that implants will last depends not only on the skill with which they are placed, but also on the care given

thereafter. The partnership of the patient and the dentist is crucial for maintaining dental implants. To date, a lifespan of 10 or more years is expected.

All previously written columns can be found at www.dentalhealthforlife.com. If there are certain topics you would like to see written about or questions you have please email them to me at jpstclair@dentalhealthforlife.com.

