

Mouth Matters

Dorion on Dentistry

Minis: Affordable Stability for Your Dentures



Until recently, complete denture wearers had only two options for stabilizing their dentures. One was to use messy, gooey adhesives and the other was to have conventional implants surgically placed along with hardware to attach their denture to those implants.

Implants are titanium alloy fixtures that are placed into the jaw bone to replace the roots of missing teeth. They can be used for individual tooth replacement as well as for the stabilization of dentures for people who have no teeth at all. When there are no teeth present the jaw bone begins to shrink so that after a few years there is often little or no foundation for dentures to rest on. Lower dentures in particular can become uncomfortable and unstable when this happens.

The use of conventional implants for securing a lower denture represents the state of the art in dentistry today. Historically, however, there have been a few downsides associated with implants that has limited who could benefit from this wonderful technology.

The first and most common barrier for many people is cost. Because of the precision and expertise required for their placement, the numerous steps involved and the price of the components, treatment plans involving conventional implants have proved to be simply out of reach financially for many folks.

In addition to financial barriers there are some people who, because of their underlying health problems, are not good candidates for conventional implant placement. These folks have in the past been left with no good way to stabilize their dentures and have had to struggle along as best they could.

People who've had a lot of their jaw bone shrink over the years are frequently the ones who need implants the most. Unfortunately they are often the ones for whom there is too little bone remaining to place regular implants. For

some of these folks, bone grafting procedures can be done to replace that missing bone but of course this adds to both the cost and complexity of the treatment.

Well, here's some good news!! We now have available a simpler more affordable way to stabilize lower (and upper if needed) dentures using something called mini-implants.

Mini Implants have been around for a few years and were originally developed for temporary use to help secure dentures while conventional implants were healing and integrating into the bone. What doctors were finding, however, was that these temporary mini implants were almost impossible to get out after they were no longer needed.

This problem led researchers to conclude that mini implants were a lot more stable than had originally been predicted. Hence mini implants such as the MDI system have recently received clearance from both the FDA in the U.S. and Health Canada here at home for use as permanent fixtures to anchor dentures.

Here are some of the advantages of mini implants. First, they cost a fraction of their conventional larger, multi component cousins; second, the surgery is much simpler and faster so there are fewer chances for complications; and third, they are much narrower than regular implants so they can be placed in much thinner jaws, often eliminating the need to do bone grafting.

If you have been putting up with loose, uncomfortable dentures and have been putting off dental implants for any of the reasons mentioned here, ask your dentist if mini implants might be the affordable solution for your problem because . . . your "Mouth Matters".

Yours for better dental health,

Rae Dorion, DDS

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