

Have you ever heard the expression when surprised, I dropped my teeth??

It's a saying we hear less now because the percentage of people expecting to have dentures and actually having dentures is less. For many who do have dentures, the problems of dentures still remain.

Two more common complaints we hear are: (1) The dentures dropping when speaking or eating and (2) A greatly decreased ability to taste food. The lower jaw is especially prone to having a loose and ill fitting denture because the jaw bone dissolves relatively quickly after losing its function which is to hold in teeth. Amazingly, the jaw bone for most people, is about one and one half inch thick and can quickly resorb to less than the width of your baby finger after losing teeth and placing a denture over it. That jawbone not only cannot comfortably hold a lower denture, but could even break while chewing on a hard nut. This phenomenon is not just for the very old. We routinely see people under 50 years old having this problem.

So what is the answer to this loss of taste and inability to hold a denture in? If we get to it early enough when there is still enough bone, we now have the ability to place dental implants comfortably into the bone and then use them in a ball and socket form to hold a denture. The top, plastic portion of dentures which fits over the roof of your mouth and decreases your ability to taste, can be eliminated. Just imagine that now you or a loved one that suffers the negative effects of dentures, has the ability to snap in a very small denture allowing improved taste and comfortable eating.

Although this procedure is relatively comfortable and much less costly than one would think, it must be done before that bone is lost. There are ways to build some bone back, but that process is not only more expensive, but much more involved and uncomfortable. For those who have only lost one tooth or a few, dental implants can fill in those spaces and give you a new bionic tooth that will be impervious to cavities.

And we baby boomers with all our fillings, crowns, and root canals probably will visit implants in the future. That is both good news and bad news. The good news is that we are lost, we can simply pop in an implant and easily replace a lost tooth. The bad news is that those teeth that had their first fillings at age 6, their larger fillings at age 16, crowns and root canal at age 40, will likely not hold up when we reach our 80's. It can be humorous to think of us at age 90 with our bionic teeth, knees, hips and surgically corrected eyes. It's an amazing world we live in. Today is the first day of the rest of your life.