

LONG-TERM SATISFACTION WITH DENTAL IMPLANTS

As we live longer, older adults have every expectation of preserving their chewing ability and oral health. In cases where tooth replacement is necessary, dental implants have emerged as the most natural-looking and best functioning option. To best gauge how dental-implant patients feel about their dental restorations, a questionnaire was sent to 587 patients, eight to fourteen years after their procedures. Of the 400 individuals who responded, a great majority (81 percent) indicated that they experienced high chewing comfort. The mean time elapsed since implant installation was 10 years. Fully 94 percent of those answering the survey said that they were satisfied or sufficiently satisfied with the aesthetic aspects of their implant restorations.

P.S. According to a National Institutes of Health (NIH) study, 90 percent of the dental-implant patients surveyed rated the procedure as “good” or “excellent.”

DIVER’S MOUTH SYNDROME

According to a recent study involving 100 certified recreational divers, dental problems can become more apparent or exacerbated underwater. Researchers found that the most common problem reported by divers was “barodontalgia.” More popularly known as “tooth squeeze,” barodontalgia is the experience of a squeezing sensation or pain in teeth that occurs as changing air pressure forces any pockets of air in teeth (such as those found in untreated cavities) to expand and contract. Other divers reported jaw and gum pain, which was most likely caused by clenching hard on the mouthpiece, as well as the loosening of crowns. With this in mind, those planning on scuba diving are advised to visit the dentist first to help avoid “diver’s mouth syndrome.”

P.S. Scuba divers may want their dentists to evaluate their mouthpieces for fit and even distribution of biting pressure.

GETTING LONG IN THE TOOTH?

“Long in the tooth” is an ancient folk expression that originally was used in reference to a horse’s age, because horses’ teeth appear to get longer as their gums recede. This age-related phenomenon is not limited to horses, of course. Not only do our gums tend to recede as we get older, but poor oral hygiene and periodontal disease are also linked to “gingival recession” (receding gums). “Periodontitis,” which means “inflammation around the tooth,” damages the soft tissue surrounding the teeth. If left untreated, gums will continue to recede, and the risk of tooth loss will rise. With this in mind, it’s important to take notice of bleeding gums while brushing your teeth, the first symptom of “gingivitis.”

P.S. Good oral health habits, such as brushing at least twice a day, flossing daily, and getting regular dental checkups can help prevent and reverse gingivitis, the most common form of gum disease.

TOOTH DISCOLORATION

When brown spots appear on teeth, it may be a sign of any number of conditions. Many dark-colored foods and drinks contain “chromogens,” substances in organic fluids that form color when oxidized. For instance, the tannic acid in red wine can not only stain teeth, but the stains can also become permanent, especially among people with poor dental hygiene. Nicotine and tobacco products can also have a similar effect, as the particles in cigarettes, cigars, and chewing tobacco stick to microscopic pores in tooth enamel. These stains eventually become darker and more difficult to remove. Lastly, brown spots on teeth may indicate accumulated plaque that hardens into a substance (“tartar”) that is linked with tooth decay and tooth discoloration.

P.S. As plaque and tartar eat the sugars that pass through the mouth, they produce acids, which cause decay and weaken enamel.