

Implant Overdentures: Their Benefits for Patients

During my 46-year career in dentistry, the most significant paradigm shift in diagnosis, treatment planning and definitive treatment for patients has been the introduction of oral implants. They typically provide superior long-term results compared with traditional methods of replacing missing teeth. This benefit is particularly apparent when treating patients who have lost all their teeth and have conventional complete dentures. Such patients can now have implants that provide support and retention for their dentures. This type of a denture is known as an “implant overdenture” because the denture fits over the top of implants. Substantial scientific data are available regarding the psychosocial, functional and anatomic benefits patients derive from implant overdentures.

PSYCHOSOCIAL BENEFITS

Psychosocial benefits include improved appearance,^[1] patient satisfaction^[2] and quality of life.^[3] Dentures that are supported and/or retained by implants can enhance a patient's appearance compared with conventional dentures because such dentures are stabilized by implants, and thus the teeth can be placed in optimal esthetic positions without causing denture instability when the oral muscles contract. Patients with implant overdentures also report better satisfaction compared with conventional complete dentures and higher quality of life.

FUNCTIONAL BENEFITS

Patients with implant overdentures have an increased biting force compared with patients who wear conventional complete dentures, and thus their ability to chew food improves.^[4,5] As a result, they can eat a broader array of food choices and this has a positive impact on nutrition and the intake of healthy, harder-to-chew foods.^[6]

ANATOMIC/BIOLOGIC BENEFITS

There are biologic costs when patients lose all their teeth and have to wear complete dentures. This results in continued, gradual bone loss due to the pressure of the denture on the underlying bone, making it increasingly difficult to comfortably wear dentures over time. Patients with implant overdentures experience less bone loss over time than they would have with conventional complete dentures.^[7] In addition, they will have less atrophy of the muscles around the mouth because the stability of their implant overdenture allows for greater muscle activity without displacing the denture.^[8]

In summary, implant overdentures offer multiple benefits for patients who have lost all their teeth.

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