

Implant Supported Dentures

By Dr. Eric Gustavsen, Published in the Walla Walla Union Bulletin 5/18/12

My earliest introduction to the tribulations of denture wearers was hearing my grandfather muttering something unintelligible at his dentures over the bathroom sink... and I knew it wasn't a Norwegian prayer of thanksgiving.

If you have dentures you already know this. Dentures can be troublesome! Chewing, talking and even smiling can be difficult. They can come loose at the most inopportune times. A patient who works in retail recounted an experience where he turned abruptly to greet someone and his denture flew out of his mouth sailing directly at a very startled client.

Fortunately this gentleman was athletic and snatched the teeth out of midair before they hit the lady. Trying to act nonchalant he said casually, "That's never happened to me before." The lady exclaimed "Well, me either!"

If you have dentures you may have wondered how you can make them fit better, stay in place more securely, and feel more like your real teeth once did.

- The first product to try is a denture adhesive such as Fixadent or Polident etc. These can be difficult to clean up, but for some people they work quite effectively. Most people however, prefer a less messy long-term solution. When you grow tired of cleaning that sticky goo out...
- Have an evaluation to see if a reline will help to snug up the fit of your denture and create some suction. When a person has teeth removed the gums and bone shrink rapidly for about a year. They will continue to shrink at a slower pace for the duration of life and the gap created is a major cause of poorly fitting dentures. A reline refits

your current prosthesis to the shape of your gums.

- It's important that there be a balanced platform of top and bottom teeth to slide around on. If there are missing teeth on the opposite jaw the balance will be upset and the plate will come loose. Have missing teeth replaced.
- If it has been a long time since the plate was made, often the best solution is to get a new denture. Old plates often have crack lines and stains that trap bacteria and emit odors to say nothing of teeth with no tread left.

If you have already explored all these options with no success where do you turn next? Help is available in the form of dental implants. Small titanium root forms are placed below the gum line and given a chance to heal. Once they are firmly in place a suction cup or magnetic fitting is attached that will firmly hold the denture to the implant. This allows people who haven't been able to eat solid food like carrots, corn on the cob, or cauliflower to be able to bite without their denture flipping up.

Having the confidence to chew, smile or greet someone again without the fear of ones dentures shifting can be life altering.

In Walla Walla these implants are usually placed by a specialist such as an oral surgeon (Dr's Caso or Ash) or a periodontist (Dr Olson) but some general dentists are getting the necessary training to provide this service. Check with your dentist.

If you have difficulty with your dentures, don't just cuss at them in Norwegian. See if you are a candidate for life altering dental implants.

