



teeth



new technologies with dental implants

SYDNEY IMPLANT AND COSMETIC DENTIST **DR DAVID DUNN** SAYS THE LATEST DENTAL ADVANCES MAKE THE TREATMENT OF MISSING OR FAILING TEETH EASIER THAN EVER.

Tooth loss affects many Australians, young and old, male or female, wealthy or poor – it does not discriminate. The causes of tooth loss, however, are varied and often multifactorial.

Congenitally missing teeth, where permanent teeth fail to develop, is relatively common. This is mostly seen as one or two missing teeth; however, in some individuals with certain congenital entities, they may be missing most of their permanent teeth, resulting in psychological, aesthetic and functional challenges. In most cases, congenitally missing teeth has a genetic basis. Some of the more common missing teeth are the third molars, maxillary (upper) lateral incisors and second premolars.

Trauma is another common cause of tooth loss and can range from a car accident through to being hit by a cricket ball or falling off a bike. This is most commonly seen as a single missing tooth or indeed multiple missing teeth, and often in the upper and or lower front teeth.

Dental caries (decay) and periodontal disease (inflammation of the gums and loss of supporting bone

around the roots of the teeth) are the most common mouth diseases resulting in tooth loss. Dental caries are more often seen in younger people, while periodontal disease at its most destructive is normally evident in the middle-aged and elderly.

Tooth loss that is a result of dental caries is generally restricted to a single or a few teeth, while periodontal disease is generally more widespread and results more commonly in multiple tooth loss and, in some cases, complete loss of teeth (edentulism).

Other causes of tooth loss can be associated with other disease states, especially cancers or tumours in the mouth, or iatrogenic causes and misadventure.

The functionality and relevance of teeth are obvious, as they enable us to eat a wide variety of foods of various textures and hardness. However, teeth are also very important for many other reasons. Firstly, they support the lips and cheeks, giving a more aesthetic appearance. You only have to consider the collapsed facial appearance of a person upon removing their dentures to appreciate this.

Secondly, teeth are critical for speech and, along with the tongue and lips, facilitate accurate and appropriate pronunciation of various sounds. Teeth also maintain what we call the 'vertical dimension of occlusion', or the vertical relationship between the jaws. Again, if this is not maintained the facial appearance is 'sunken in', accentuating various creases and folds in the face.

Healthy teeth also preserve the special bone that supports them, the alveolar bone, which in the absence of teeth begins to shrink or resorb. Thus the bony ridges supporting teeth, once teeth are lost, will over time shrink, narrow and flatten. This then becomes a very difficult issue for denture wearers to support and stabilise removable dentures, and hence the need to use denture adhesives or avoid certain foods, for example.

Thankfully today, with advances in implant dentistry, no one – whether young, middle-aged or elderly, male or female – needs to suffer the aesthetic and functional problems of tooth loss. Dental implants can provide a long-term solution to the multiple problems of missing teeth.

Dental implants can be used to replace a single missing tooth, multiple missing teeth, or indeed a full replacement for people who have lost all of their teeth. For multiple tooth loss, a single implant to replace each individual missing tooth is not necessarily required. We are often able to undertake a full upper or lower teeth replacement supported by only four implants.

Historically, implant tooth replacement has been a relatively slow process, however, with new techniques and technologies this process has become more predictable and much faster, allowing our patients to return to full function and aesthetics in a minimum amount of time. In many cases today we are able to take a patient with a failing or lost tooth/teeth, remove the tooth/teeth where relevant, place immediate implants and connect replacement teeth to the implants on the same day or following day.

Surprisingly, implant treatment is not generally a painful process for the majority of patients. Ninety-five percent of our treatment is performed in our practice, under local anaesthetic only or oral sedation. Intravenous sedation is also available with our specialist anaesthetist.

Our patients are comfortable and able to go home the same day as their treatment. In fact, some of our patients even return to work the same day.

Importantly, age is not a contraindication to treatment. We have many patients who have been transformed from the problems of full removable dentures to having fixed implant-supported teeth – even aged in their 80s!

Implant dentistry is not inexpensive but most people agree that you cannot put a price on your health, your ability to eat foods without restriction, your speech, as well as your appearance and overall psychological wellbeing and self-confidence. **acsm**

Case study 1



BEFORE

AFTER immediate implant placement and all-ceramic crowns by Dr Dunn

Case study 2



BEFORE

AFTER immediate implant placement of the upper right front tooth and all-ceramic crowns by Dr Dunn



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AFTER immediate implant placement of the upper right front tooth and all-ceramic crowns by Dr Dunn