

Ask The Dentists

Dear Dr. Winter, I've had full dentures for over 20 years recently had "all-on-4's" done on the lower jaw. Because of the large amount of bone loss and the lack of facial support due to the small size of the all-on-4 prosthesis, there is a large amount of wrinkling forming around my mouth and my cheeks are sinking in making me look years older than I am. What are my options in restoring facial support?

Dear A. I am sorry you are having problems. One of Implantology's frustrations is lack of bone. When you wore your dentures for over 20 years there was significant atrophy of the remaining bone due to friction of dentures and dis-use atrophy. When you receive an All-On-4 implant hybrid (4 dental implants supporting a full arch of teeth) you are limited to putting the prosthesis over the remaining bone unless substantial grafting is done to augment the bone.

If that bone has receded and no augmentation is done you will be left with teeth that are sunk back into your face more, leaving you with lack of support and more wrinkles. The first option you have is to ask the doctors to discuss a bar overdenture. By changing from a fixed prosthesis to a removable overdenture you gain lip support as the flange of the denture will fill out your face with the acrylic of the denture. I just published an article on this exact topic! You may read it under www.hamptondentalassociates.com Then under meet the doctors and publications you can read, "Maxillo-Mandibular Atrophy: Success Through Interdisciplinary Planning. This highlights a case where a patient actually underwent hip grafting and sinus lifts to place 10 maxillary and 5 mandibular implants with a goal of fixed teeth. We still did not have enough bone to fill out his smile so bar overdentures were used to give a facial profile and smile that was normal and filled out! Using All-On-4 technique violates many prosthetic principles from my Implantology training: 1. No 3 false teeth in a row. (Metal fatigues with the cube of the distance so bridges that have 3 unsupported pontics will experience faster chipping and screw loosening.



Drs. Richard and Bruce Winter

2. No cantilevers. (Lower All-On-4 prostheses often have teeth sticking off the back like diving boards called cantilevers. This increases stresses unless very strict rules for cantilever length are followed.) Lastly, 3. Implants in all key implant positions. (Arches that are edentulous require implants in the first molar, canine and central position or 5 sides of a pentagon.) According to Dr. Carl Misch in Contemporary Implantology 3rd Edition, failing to insure these 3 principles may lead to increased forces and premature failure of an implant bridge. All-On-4 is an approved technique with literature support but if more support can be offered it is wise to have more implants to replace 14 missing teeth than just 4. If you would like to come in for a second opinion or if any of our readers are interested in implants please call us at 414-464-9021 for an appointment. Dr. Winter is one of only 535 dentists in the country to hold the prestigious American Board of Oral Implantologists/Implant Dentists degrees through the ABDS American Board of Dental Specialties.

Yours for better dentistry,
Dr. Richard Winter MAGD, DICOI, DABOI/ID
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