

Ask The Dentists April

Dear Dr. Winter, I need implants in my upper and lower arches. I have had several consultations and opinions are all over the board! Some of the consults said I only needed 4 implants for the upper and 4 for the lower and others have said I need just two for the lower. I did tell them I wanted to be able to have teeth that didn't come out and I don't have a lot of bone in either arch. What are your thoughts? Thanks, Jack J.

Dear Jack, there are several good questions here. I will try and break them down and I encourage you and the readers to read my articles on Upgradeable Dentistry and Advanced Treatment Planning under "publications" at: www.winterdental.com where I have written articles about these very questions. I also outline in various publications the differences between removable overdentures and fixed implant bridges and show examples of each type of implant treatment.

First of all, without a consultation and x-rays I cannot comment on your specific situation. The number of implants you require is dependent upon the quality and quantity of your remaining bone, your budget and the type of prosthesis you require. Whether the implant restoration should be "fixed" or non-removable by the patient or whether it is acceptable to remove the implant supported denture and take it out at night is a personal decision and both have advantages and disadvantages. Most people that lose their teeth want "fixed" teeth. In addition, the patient's health, medication(s) and anatomy all play a role in deciding upon the ideal implant restoration. It is important to note that sometimes we can start with a removable implant denture do to budgetary constraints and add implants over a year or two and Upgrade to a fixed restoration or bridge when finances allow!

Next, we can discuss the number of required implants. In the upper arch most people have already been wearing a denture or partial and they have already undergone bone loss. As bone is lost in the upper jaw the sinuses expand and in order to place implants in this area there is a need to "grow the bone" by doing a sinus grafting procedure and possibly a block grafting procedure. This sinus augmentation is a procedure that will allow implants of normal length to be placed in the posterior upper jaw. A way to bypass this is a zygomatic or long implant that is used in an "all-on-four" procedure. This procedure will place 4 implants at angles that are used to support a full arch of denture teeth or a "hybrid" prosthesis. This may be a predictable procedure but replacing 14 teeth (24 roots) with 4 implants doesn't provide as large a margin of safety as using 7-9

implants per arch. This is a matter of philosophy and the treating implant dentist and surgeon will be able to explain their philosophy based upon their education, skill and judgment.

As far as the two-implant option given to you for your lower arch, this is strictly to support a lower overdenture, which is removable. In order to have a fixed restoration (non-removable) you would require a minimum of 6 maxillary and 5 mandibular implants in my practice. That being said if you are able to place more implants and over-engineer the situation you are always better off as these extra implants will redistribute chewing forces over 6-9 implants, instead of just four.

We offer complimentary implant consultations or comprehensive examination and x-ray visits to our readers. Please call us at 414-464-9021 to schedule your visit! We look forward to meeting you. You may see examples of our dentistry at www.winterdental.com

Yours for great dental health,

Dr. Richard Winter MAGD, DICOI

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