

Ask the Dentist July 2011

Dear Dr. Winter, I saw you for a consultation over a year ago and I want to thank you so much for the education you provided for me! I had to go with my existing insurance plan so they removed my upper teeth and made me an upper denture and I am miserable. I can't take my denture out of my mouth at night as I don't want my husband to ever see me without my teeth. Can you please re-explain the number of implants I need to have a palate-less denture or implant bridge? Can you also review the sequence of appointments if I need sinus lifts and implants? I will come back in with my husband and look forward to getting rid of my denture for good.

Dear E. I am sorry you are having problems and I look forward to helping you on this journey. Sinus grafting is done when people don't have enough bone to retain implants in the back of the upper jaw. These procedures called "sinus lifts" are really a grafting procedure where bone is added through a small window between the sinus and the underlying bone. You can see videos of this at www.winterdental.com

After this bone has had time to grow and heal for 6-8 months, implants can be placed. These implants then need to integrate into the grafted bone and after another 4-8 months the implants can be restored with a prosthesis. This can be either a "snap-on-denture" or a screw retained or cemented denture which is called a hybrid prosthesis. If enough implants can be placed then a porcelain bridge can be cemented onto the implants for a beautiful cosmetic result. You can see an example of this at www.wisconsinprosthodontics.com

Specifically, to have a palate-less denture, you need a minimum of 6 implants. There are techniques where fewer implants are used to provide this service but I don't ascribe to this philosophy. The replacement of 14 teeth with only 4 implants, while feasible, may not offer as much support as 6-9 maxillary implants to restore 14 missing teeth. It is better to over engineer a restoration and have more support than to have an implant fail and be left with an inadequate number of implants for a given denture prosthesis.

The last thing we need to discuss is the "homework" that must be done to restore your mouth. First a new denture needs to be made to insure all of your cosmetic goals can be met. This beautiful denture becomes a blue print for your implant denture or bridge. Secondly, you will need a CAT scan to evaluate your sinus' prior to your sinus lift surgery. If you have any sinus pathology, polyps, or bony projections in your sinus they need to be identified prior to the procedure!

You didn't ask me if this hurts! Typically patients that have this procedure report minimal discomfort. There are very few nerves in the area of this surgery and the amount of surgery is usually minimal so the amount of swelling and discomfort are

usually less than what you experienced removing your teeth.

You can find out more information at WWW.WINTERDENTAL.COM

Photos, videos, and interest free financing information are available on our web sites.

Sincerely,

Richard Winter D.D.S. M.A.G.D. D.I.C.O.I.

Master Academy of General Dentistry

Diplomate International Congress of Oral Implantologists

Bruce Winter D.D.S.

Board M.A.T.C.