

SOMETHING TO *SMILE* ABOUT

DENTAL AND IMPLANT
SURGEON JEAN PAUL
DEMAJO CONSIDERS
THE BENEFITS OF OVER-
DENTURES

Since the times of the Egyptian pharaohs, dentures were commonly used to replace single, multiple as well as full arches of teeth. A substantial percentage of the population still wear dentures today. Many are resigned to the fact that their dentures offer limited support and stability.

ADVANTAGES OF DENTURES

- Cheap
- Aesthetic
- Easy maintenance
- Replace hard and soft tissues

DISADVANTAGES OF DENTURES

- Removable
- Mobility on chewing and talking
- Loss of taste
- Psychologically traumatic



Metal-bar attachment



Ball attachments



Locator retention clips



Yellow plastic clips in denture to engage on bar



Rubber sockets on underside of denture for ball retention



Fitting surface of denture with female locator attachments

Having pointed out the disadvantages, patients may still be relatively happy with their dentures. Long standing edentulism results in a large volume of bone loss. Dentures replace this large volume of bone by easily adding pink acrylic resin material below the teeth. This allows the surrounding facial tissues to remain supported, in turn reducing the signs of ageing. Fixed implant prosthetics eliminate any denture movement; but this might mean that the patient would have to undergo extensive treatment. Treatments such as invasive bone grafting, the placement of many implants and the hefty price-tag which they command, often puts patients off from choosing this fixed treatment option.

There is, however, a very successful intermediate known as an over-denture. This allows patient's to hang onto their dentures but at the same time eliminate denture mobility and loss of taste. This involves placing a couple of implants – as opposed to several implants in the fixed implant-bridge scenario – to secure the denture in place and allow for a more comfortable and stable denture, features currently lacking with conventional dentures.

In the mandible two implants may be placed in the anterior area of the jaw. Bone is always abundant in this area avoiding the need to graft bone. In the maxilla two to four implants may be required to allow for the construction of a denture without having to cover the palate (roof) of the mouth. So-called male components, such as bars, clips and balls, among others, are attached onto the implants and used to clip onto the respective female component embedded in the denture. These attachments need minor maintenance. At most the rubber or elastic sleeve in the female component would have to be changed annually. Hygiene is much easier to maintain too. The over-denture remains a removable prosthesis and may be removed daily to rinse and clean accordingly. Once out of the mouth, the patient may also clean the male components attached to the implants reducing the risk of inflammation around the implant. This gives the denture wearer added peace of mind that his or her teeth are very clean.

Aesthetics are not put in question, as porcelain teeth may also be placed on dentures offering that cutting edge normally present with fixed teeth.

ADVANTAGES OF OVER-DENTURES:

- Replace hard and soft tissues
- Easily removed to clean
- Highly stable on eating and talking
- Aesthetic
- Cheaper than fixed-implant prosthesis

Over-dentures offer another treatment option for patients wishing to improve their current dental situation. It is never too late to change – after all it's for the better! **G**

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