



Bite

Word of mouth

14 DEC 2012

Featured

Implants to replace teeth—getting close to the real thing.

You brush, you floss, you see your dentist for regular check-ups and cleaning—but even with our best efforts, there are still times when the inevitable happens and the tooth, or teeth, must come out. That's when we need to look at options for replacement.

Humanity has been dealing with tooth loss ever since we evolved them. One of the best-known historical examples is George Washington, the first president of the USA. Washington suffered from dental problems all his life, and eventually had to have the last of his teeth extracted. Although legend has it that the dentures he used to replace his teeth were carved from wood, this isn't true. Four sets of Washington's false teeth exist today, and researchers examining them found that their components included materials as varied as gold, lead, hippopotamus ivory, and human and animal teeth. Washington's false teeth were no joy: they were held in his mouth using springs and wires, caused no end of discomfort plus

he claimed they distorted his appearance.

Today's dentures have greatly improved over the contraptions George Washington was stuck with, but they still follow the same basic design (although we've managed to do away with the springs and wires). Fortunately for today's patients, modern dentistry has developed a new and better alternative called *implants*. Dental implants are a rising trend in reconstructive dentistry, allowing dentists to restore a natural appearance, with functional and long-lasting teeth.

George Washington's dentures



Implants and their advantages

Dental implants come in two parts—the implant proper, which is inserted into the jawbone, and the crown, which is attached to the top of the implant.

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Thank you

This month...

I was listening to kids Christmas songs the other day and the song "All I want for Christmas is my two front teeth" came on.

It got me thinking about how close we are to being able to put new teeth back in for when the worst case scenario plays out, and what it would have been like to put up with the original types of false teeth.

Grafting back teeth grown in a petri dish is still a pipedream, however dental implants are pretty much the real deal

This month's feature article explores the current state of implant technology.

Dr Simon Franks



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jaw, and the replacement tooth that sits on top of the implanted root. This process can replace anything from a single missing tooth, to the entire upper and lower complement of teeth.

With the huge modern advances in materials and procedures patients are finding numerous advantages of going down the implant route such as:

Implants, with their secure fit and natural appearance, give tooth-loss patients a beautiful smile and improved self-confidence;

Dental implants don't shift or slip like dentures, so you'll experience natural chewing and speech. No more mumbling or slurring your words—and you can eat your favourite foods without worry; and

Dental implants have a great track record for success. With proper care, dental implants can last a lifetime.

So what about Stem Cells? – Fact or Fiction?

For years, researchers have been investigating stem cells in an effort to grow teeth. Toward this end, endodontics professor Dr. Peter Murray and

colleagues from the College of Dental Medicine at Nova Southeastern University (NSU) claim to have developed methods to control adult stem cell growth and generate "real" replacement teeth.

The NSU researchers' approach is to extract stem cells from oral tissue, such as inside a tooth itself, or from bone marrow. After being harvested, the cells are mounted to a polymer scaffold in the shape of the desired tooth. The polymer is the same material used in dissolvable sutures, so the scaffold eventually dissolves away leaving a new 'tooth' formed in shape of the scaffold. The claim is that teeth can be grown in the lab then inserted into a patient's mouth or the stem cells can be grown within the mouth reaching a full-sized tooth within a few months.

So far, teeth have been regenerated for mice and monkeys, but whether science permits us to put these teeth back into the jaw remains to be seen and at this stage would appear more science fiction than science fact.



Healthy Hygiene Hints

Looking after your investments—restored teeth.

Prosthetic teeth, whether they be implanted, crowned, bridged, or denture teeth—are designed to act like your natural teeth—so they should be cared for in that way! Restored teeth are all still connected to your natural dental tissue in some way, so they are still at risk of many of the same infections as your natural teeth. While metal & porcelain will not decay, you can still experience decay underneath your crown. As well, implant teeth are still at risk of developing gum disease around them which can lead to them falling out.

Rule of thumb this month—whether they are real, fake or enhanced... look after them like your own. This means tooth brushing all surfaces, flossing in between as well as underneath those bridges & wire retainers!

Jenna

Thank You!!!

raised \$600

Simon's November effort raised \$600. Thanks to all those who generously donated!

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