

TOOTHFULLY. *speaking*



Replacing a tooth - is it worth it?

Dr. Preeti Desai My primary role as a health care professional is “education”. The actual Latin translation for the “Doctor” in front of my name is “teacher” first - the role of the clinician and performing surgery is second! As such, I was completely humbled by one of my patients last week - it goes to show you that we humans learn something new every day!

I was in the midst of completing a treatment plan for a lovely lady that involved removing a fractured, infected root canaled tooth, replacing it with a bone graft and then placing an implant. A few months later a crown is placed returning her mouth to full function and health again. This process can be lengthy and costly (over 6-9 months) and can cost up to \$5000 to replace the extracted molar.

She recounted to me how numerous friends and family members along the way had told her not to follow through and spend the money on something else! “Why are you doing all that?”. I have even heard this comment from other dental and medical health professionals!

After hearing this, I was absolutely shocked! I felt that as a profession, we WERE getting the message out to “educate” the public in realizing how important our teeth are and how losing even one tooth can have so many short and long term negative repercussions. NOT! I realized that this was a failure of dentists if even one person thinks this way.

Losing even one tooth will leave you a dental cripple! Research repeatedly shows that the side effects are numerous and include: (a) a person favouring the other side for chewing (b) unilateral function leads to more food impaction and gum disease (c) unilateral function leads to more dental cavities, tooth fractures and wear on one side of your mouth (d) one sided function leads to more muscle strain and TMJ joint problems and headaches, shoulder pain etc (e) more root canals (f) more risk of tooth extraction on the “good side” from overwork (g) poor mastication and biting force especially meats (g) fewer fruits and vegetables eaten (h) fewer vitamins and minerals consumed later in life (i) digestive issues from poor food chewing (j) bloating and constipation (k) lower quality of life (l) problems exercising.

Now granted, there are partial dentures and bridges to replace missing teeth. This is 19th century thinking. The days of taking out a tooth and not even considering the options is absolutely NOT accepted today in any dental code of ethics.

My patients constantly humble me! When I suggest many optimal treatment options for them to minimize costs and yet deliver my best to them their most common reply confirms a very simple common sense idea: “Dr Desai why wouldn’t I replace my tooth in the best way? I don’t want a hole in my head! and really \$5000 over the next 50 years that I am going to live is just \$100.00 a year!!!! That means I can enjoy 50 years of eating good food - no instant holiday can give me that!” Here here!

Happy Heart Month Kamloops - the best gift you can give you and your loved ones is a full set of teeth!



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