

## Implant Options for the Fully Edentulous Patient

### 1. PORCELAIN TO GOLD FIXED BRIDGE

The most appealing implant option for fully edentulous situations is the fixed porcelain/gold bridge. In the upper arch, 8 to 12 implants are required, and 7 to 10 implants in the lower arch. The bridge is similar to that which would be placed over natural teeth, except that it is cemented or screwed onto the implants. With this option the patient most closely experiences a return to their natural teeth.

With this system, there has to be adequate bone volume, and sufficient lip support from the remaining ridge, so that the teeth on the bridge appear to be coming out of the gum just like a natural tooth. The patient can also experience the “teeth in an hour” concept and have a temporary bridge placed right at the time of placing the implants. The temporary bridge would be worn for approximately 6 months while the implants integrate to the bone. The main disadvantage of this option is the cost.



Full upper implant supported bridge. Some of the screw access holes are visible.



The implant teeth exit from the gum similar to natural teeth.

### 2. IMPLANT SUPPORTED DENTURE

With as few as 2 implants, an existing or new complete denture can have substantial improvement in stability. The denture is still removable for cleaning, and patients are encouraged to clean the ‘overdenture implant abutments’ at the same time.

This is the simplest form of implant treatment for helping existing denture wearers, and is also the most cost effective. The patient continues to wear their existing denture during the treatment phase, so that they are not without teeth at any time. The implants are inserted with just local anesthetic (freezing). Different types of attachments are available to go over the implants, with corresponding hardware that sits inside the denture and grips to the implant studs.

This type of treatment can also be used to help stabilize existing or new partial dentures and eliminates the need for clasps on remaining natural teeth.



Overdenture attachments over the 2 implants.



O-ring attachments are visible inside the lower denture.

### 3. IMPLANT SUPPORTED BAR AND OVERDENTURE

With 3 to 5 implants in the lower arch, and 4 to 6 implants in the upper arch, an implant supported bar can be screwed down onto the implants. Special attachments can be added to the bar that would have corresponding components in the denture to grip onto.

This option provides excellent stability for chewing and socializing, but the denture must be removed for cleaning. The bar is not removable by the patient, and the bar and underlying implants must be brushed regularly as well.

The advantages of this option are that cleaning is easy, and because one still has a denture, the lip support and cosmetics is easier to manage, particularly in the upper arch.

One of the advantages of this option in the upper arch, is that the patient can be without the palatal portion of the denture and therefore better enjoy their food and socializing.



Lower bar supported by 4 implants.



Lower removable denture fits over the bar attachments.



Upper bar supported by 6 implants.



Upper removable denture dips over the upper bar and the palate is free of acrylic.

## 4. FIXED IMPLANT SUPPORTED 'HYBRID' DENTURE

With 5 to 7 implants in the lower arch, and up to 8 or 10 implants in the upper arch a non removable option is possible. Dr. Bridger feels that this option is usually the treatment of choice for the lower arch. It is possible to have an immediate 'hybrid' type bridge placed right at the time of implant placement with the new "teeth in an hour" concept.

This modality has been referred to as a "hybrid" because it is halfway between a denture and a fixed bridge. There is a gold frame that supports an acrylic base and resin denture teeth. Patients do not remove this type of fixed denture. They must clean around the bridge and the implants underneath in a similar fashion as they would natural teeth.

One of the advantages of this option is that it more closely returns the patient to the sensation and psychological feeling of having their own natural teeth, since the patient cannot remove the appliance. This option is more common in the lower arch than in the upper.

The main disadvantage is that cleaning is more challenging, particularly in the upper arch. Some patients find food collection and speech problems with the upper fixed hybrid because of the space between the gum and the denture to allow for cleaning.



Lower edentulous arch has 5 implants



Lower fixed 'hybrid' bridge screws down over these 5 implants



Upper fixed hybrid shows space between bridge and gum for access for cleaning.



The same upper fixed hybrid shows the screw access holes to the implants that are sealed over after insertion in the mouth.