

## **Maintaining Your Dental Implant Teeth**

Congratulations on getting your new implant teeth! These instructions are provided to help you understand how to care for your dental implants and keep them healthy. We want you to enjoy your implant teeth for many years to come. Here are some important tips on maintaining your implant teeth. Keep in mind that the long-term success of your dental implants requires effort on your part but we are here to help when needed.

### **1) Daily Oral Hygiene**

Practicing good oral hygiene is the most important step you can take in maintaining your dental health. Dental plaque is a sticky film made up of bacteria that adheres to your teeth and/or implants and causes gum disease. This film takes about 24 hours to form. As such, it is important to thoroughly brush and floss your teeth and/or implants at least once every single day. If you have the implant teeth made at Misch Implant Dentistry, our office will show you how to properly brush and floss when you get your new teeth. If you have the implant teeth made at another office make sure they show you how to care for your implants. Even if the implant teeth were made in another office, we encourage you to return to Misch Implant Dentistry for an evaluation of your implants and new implant teeth. It is not that we don't trust your dentist, we just want to make sure everything was done properly and that the dental laboratory designed the implant teeth so you have the best chance of maintaining them and enjoying them for many years.

The critical area to clean and remove plaque from the teeth and/or implants is along the gum line around the base of the implant teeth - not necessarily the teeth themselves. You should not rush and spend at least four minutes or longer on brushing. Some electronic toothbrushes also have timers that you can set. We recommend you buy an electric toothbrush such as a Phillips Sonicare, Oral-B Pro 1000 or Oral-B iO Series 9. You can purchase an electric toothbrush at your pharmacy or online. Divide up the mouth in four sections so you can focus on doing a good and thorough job - upper right, upper left, lower right, lower left (both cheek and tongue sides). If you have removable implant teeth (overdenture) you can clean the individual implant abutments with attachments using a regular toothbrush or an electronic toothbrush. You should also brush the replacement teeth and entire prosthesis outside the mouth. This can be done with a regular toothbrush or denture brush.

Floss is needed to clean the areas between the teeth or implants. If you have individual implant crowns the care is the same as your own natural teeth. Polytetrafluorethylene floss

(PTFE) slides between the teeth easily and is less likely to shred compared to standard floss. Examples of PTFE floss include Crest Glide or GUM EEZ-Thru. If you have an implant fixed bridge, a floss threader helps make it easier to pass the floss under the bridge. It works like a needle and thread but it is made of flexible plastic with a larger loop. You can purchase floss threaders at your pharmacy or online. They are reuseable so one package should last several months. Examples of floss threaders include GUM EEZ-Thru Floss Threaders, Bridge Aid Floss Threaders or Oral-B Glide Pro-Health Threader Floss. Another good option for cleaning is Oral-B Superfloss. It has a stiffened end for threading the floss under your bridge and a spongy coating that can better clean around your implant bridge and spaces.

In some cases an interproximal or interdental brush can be used instead of flossing. An interproximal or interdental brush is a small brush that fits between or under your implant teeth along the gum line. The brush is passed under the bridge sideways (perpendicular to the bridge) and is moved back and forth to clean the sides of the implants. You can buy interdental or interproximal brushes at your pharmacy or online such as GUM Proxabrush Go-Betweens, TePe Interdental Brush or DentTek Easy Brush Advanced Clean Interdental Cleaner. Interdental brushes are reuseable and only need replacement after the bristles wear.

A Waterpic or Water Flosser can be used to remove food particles that get caught under or around your implant teeth. However the water spray is not adequate to remove the sticky plaque so you still need to also brush and floss. Removal of the adherent plaque requires mechanical disruption with a tooth brush and floss.

We also recommend you use a daily mouthwash to help kill germs that cause gum disease. Crest Pro-Health Advanced, Listerine Gum Therapy or TheraBreath Healthy Gums are over the counter rinses that may be considered. You should swish the mouthwash for a minimum of 30 to 60 seconds. In some cases we may also recommend you use a prescription chlorhexidine mouth rinse once a week such as Peridex. Our office can write a prescription for this rinse or call it into your pharmacy. The sequence for daily cleaning your implants is as follows: 1) Water Pic or Water Flosser; 2) Electric toothbrush; 3) Dental floss and/or interdental brush; 4) Mouth rinse.

If you are having any difficulty accessing any areas for plaque removal, let us know so we can help show you proper technique. If plaque is not thoroughly removed every day, the bacteria can cause gum disease around the teeth and/or implants. Gum disease can result

in infection and bone loss around your teeth and/or implants that may ultimately cause failure. If an implant develops gum disease and loses too much bone requiring removal, it could jeopardize the support of your implant teeth. This is why a commitment to rigorous daily oral hygiene is so important.

## **2) Regular Dental Check Ups**

Some patients think that implants do not need professional cleaning and check-ups like natural teeth. Nothing could be further from the truth. Although dental implants do not develop decay (cavities), they can get gum disease and this is the most common reason for complications and failure. It is important to have your teeth and/or dental implants professionally cleaned and checked on a routine basis. Studies show that patients that regularly see their dentist have better long term outcomes than those that sporadically or infrequently seek maintenance care. The maintenance interval may range between once a year to four times a year depending on your particular needs. Patients that lost their teeth due to gum disease (periodontitis) are more prone to developing gum disease around their implants. As such, a more frequent recall is recommended.

It is very important to have dental x-rays of the implants taken at least once a year to check the bone around the implants. If gum disease and/or bone loss is diagnosed early we may be able to take measures to treat the condition and better maintain the supporting bone levels. We recommend you return to Misch Implant Dentistry once a year for radiographs or have your dentist send a copy of the x-rays to us so we can check them. They can email radiographs to [info@drmisch.com](mailto:info@drmisch.com). You need to ask your dentist to send our office copies of any x-rays as they will not typically do this without your request. Early diagnosis improves your chance of maintaining your implants.

If your dentist detects any problem around your dental implants we prefer that you return to our office for an evaluation and any needed treatment. We are all specialists that perform implant procedures daily and are well trained in the best methods to correct any issues. Even if your dentist recommends a different office, please let them know we prefer to take care of you. Misch Implant Dentistry is your partner in helping to maintain your implant teeth.

## **3) Stop Smoking**

Smoking or vaping can increase your risk of developing gum disease around your teeth and/or implants. It also places you at a higher risk of developing cancers of the mouth, throat and lungs. If you need help to quit, consult your physician to discuss a smoking

cessation protocol. In addition to improving your oral health, quitting smoking will reduce your risk of lung disease, heart disease and stroke.

#### **4) Seek Emergency Care Promptly**

If you notice anything feels different with your implant teeth it is important to have this checked as soon as possible. Dental implant teeth are secured with small screws. Occasionally a screw may loosening causing the implant teeth to become mobile. If the screw is not retightened promptly it can strip or break. If you notice the teeth have movement or your bite feels different call for an appointment. If you have removable implant teeth (overdenture) the attachments will need to be periodically changed. The plastic attachments wear from removing and replacing the overdenture and movement during chewing. New attachments will improve the retention of the implant teeth. There is a charge for replacing the attachments.

If you notice bleeding, tenderness, pain or swelling of the gums around the implants it is important to have this checked. Please do not wait to see if it will go away on its own. Gum disease can often occur without any symptoms until it becomes advanced. Bone loss around a dental implant is not reversible. We cannot regrow bone around teeth or dental implants if lost due to gum disease. If peri-implantitis is not treated it can lead to advanced bone loss and need to remove the implant or implants. This could jeopardize the support of your implant teeth and may require adding new implants and/or making a new set of implant teeth. It is important to place an emphasis on seeking care promptly if you have any problems or concerns.

*Please sign this document to confirm that you have received instructions on the care of your dental implants and implant teeth. If you have any questions after reading this form please let us know.*

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Patient Signature

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Date