A peer-reviewed research article recently published in The Journal of Prosthodontics reports that significant tooth loss (missing more than 12–17 of one’s 32 natural teeth) is associated with a multitude of bad health outcomes, including increased risk of overall diseases that can lead to death. Patients who have lost their teeth are at an increased risk for developing malnutrition or obesity, cardiovascular disease, head and neck cancer and reduced cognitive function.

Plan B: Dentures, implants, ASAP

If patients lose their teeth, Felton recommends that they visit a prosthodontist to replace their teeth right away. The most common and least expensive tooth-replacement methods are full or partial dentures. Full dentures replace all the teeth by resting on the gums that cover the jawbones. Partial dentures attach to the teeth that are still present and rest on the gums and bone where the teeth are missing, according to the ACP.

For patients who need dentures right away, prosthodontists can place “immediate dentures,” which are temporary and can take about an hour. These dentures are for short-term use only, and should be replaced with high-quality, long-lasting permanent dentures, which can be available in a few days, Vickers said. In addition, prosthodontists can use CAD/CAM technology to create virtual digital dentures to replicate existing dentures to streamline the process and are excited about new technology options including 3-D printing of dentures recently approved to go to market.

The ACP recommends that patients clean their dentures by hand with a dish washing liquid and a special denture brush every day. After rinsing them thoroughly, soak the dentures in a water-based cleaning solution overnight.

Prosthodontists are specialized dentists with advanced training, committed to improving patient outcomes. From implants, crowns, veneers and tooth whitening, to full-mouth reconstruction, prosthodontists specialize in digital dentistry, CAD/CAM, and cosmetic dentistry solutions. The ACP is the only prosthodontic specialty organization whose membership is based solely on education credentials. ACP members must be in or have completed an ADA-accredited advanced education program in prosthodontics.

About the ACP

The American College of Prosthodontists is the official sponsoring organization for the specialty of prosthodontics, which is one of the only nine recognized specialties of the American Dental Association.

Founded in 1970, ACP is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to enhancing patient care, advancing the art and science of prosthodontics, promoting the specialty of prosthodontics to the public and other dentists and health care professionals, ensuring the quality of prosthodontic education and providing professional services to its members. To learn more, oral health professionals can visit www.prosthodontics.org. The organization also provides a “Find Your Local prosthodontist” search at GoToAPro.org.