Dental implants preferred option for aging bridges

A rising number of Americans have aging, worn-out bridges in their mouths that, in effect, have become bridges to nowhere for maintaining good dental health.

According to the American Academy of Implant Dentistry (AAID), patients with worn-out bridges should replace them and also consider permanent dental implants as the preferred alternative.

“Many people have had the same bridges in their mouths for 20 years or more. They were placed at a time when bridgework was considered the norm for replacing missing or compromised teeth,” said Olivia Palmer, DMD of Charleston, an associate fellow of AAID and a diplomate of the American Board of Oral Implantology.

Palmer further explained that bridges generally fall after five to 10 years as patients have difficulty flossing them.

Patients are sometimes unaware that the root surfaces below the bridgework are highly susceptible to decay. Root surface decay or decay around the margin of a bridge is not repairable, and requires new bridgework. Sometimes the teeth supporting the bridge are lost, leading to longer bridges and more compromised dentition. Implants are a longer bridge, Palmer recommends bridgework with another, possibly permanent replacement for missing teeth.

Further, highly precise computer-guided dental implant surgery has made the procedure faster, highly predictable and long-lasting with a success rate of 97 percent, far superior to outcomes with bridges.

“Advances in dental-implant procedures have come just in time for baby boomers coping with dental problems associated with advancing age, and for many that means replacing aging bridgework,” said Palmer. “With an estimated two of three Americans having at least one missing tooth, implants are becoming the preferred tooth-replacement option due to the predictable 97 percent success rate of this procedure. Implants today are one of the safest, precise and predictable procedures in dentistry,” she added.

Palmer advises anyone with one or more missing teeth who might consider having a bridge placed to weigh the benefits of implants before moving forward with a first bridge or replacing an old one. “Why rely on a bridge to nowhere when implants provide a safe, permanent replacement for missing teeth, and you don’t have to sacrifice healthy teeth to get implants, which is necessary with bridgework,” she said.

AAID can help consumers find a local credentialed implant dentist at www.aaoid.com. AAID is based in Chicago and has more than 5,500 members. It is the oldest organization dedicated to maintaining the highest standards of implant dentistry by supporting research and education to advance comprehensive implant knowledge.

(Source: American Academy of Implant Dentistry)

Study: Embrace Wetbond inhibits bacteria

Although composite resins generally attract bacteria at a much greater rate than does amalgam, a study released today indicates that Embrace “WetBond” Pit & Fissure Sealant, manufactured by Pulpdent Corporation, actually inhibits bacteria.

The study, “Comparison of Antibacterial Properties of Sealants and Amalgam,” was presented at the International Association for Dental Research in Toronto by researchers from the Tufts University School of Dental Medicine in Boston. The study compared the antibacterial properties of amalgam and three pit and fissure sealants, using Streptococcus mutans bacteria with chlorhexidine as the control.

For the study, researchers placed samples of amalgam, chlorhexidine, Embrace Wetbond, and several other commercially available sealants in Petri dishes that had been streaked with S. mutans. After allowing time for the bacteria to proliferate, they measured the zones of bacterial growth inhibition around each sample. Embrace Wetbond had the highest mean zone of inhibition against S. mutans (except for the control group), and had significant antibacterial properties in comparison to the other samples.

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