

The “Best” Way To Replace a Missing Tooth...

Life is full of options. Whether it's buying a tractor, choosing plants for the garden, or getting a tooth replaced; it seems that each and every year there are more and more options to choose from. Technology certainly has its advantages, but all those choices get confusing sometimes.

Let's take the case of a single missing tooth. If someone walks in missing one tooth, then there are generally three ways to replace that tooth: something removable (a flipper or partial plate), a fixed bridge (a porcelain tooth floating between and attached to crowns on either side), or a dental implant with tooth on top. Actually, I can come up with more options, but these are the generally accepted top three.

A lost tooth happens quite often. As dentists, it is our duty to try to explain the risks and benefits of each type of treatment available. Almost invariably, this conversation leads to the statement, “Well doc, what is the best treatment?”

Obviously this is a tricky question because every situation is different. What might be “best” for one person may not be “best” for another. It may sound simple to replace one tooth, but there are a lot of factors involved in keeping that replacement tooth healthy and looking good for the rest of one's life.

All things considered, the best answer I can give is what I'd do for myself. When I need to replace a lost tooth, I'm doing it with titanium (a dental implant).

Dental implants are titanium tooth roots that can be used to replace single missing teeth or sets of teeth. The surgery involved in placing an implant is quite painless, as there are no nerve fibers in the bone that the implant is anchored to. Most patients are pleasantly surprised when they do not need any pain medication afterwards.

The true advantage of using a dental implant to replace a missing tooth is that an implant is a one tooth solution to a one tooth problem. Bridges and partials use other teeth in the mouth for support and are prone to fail if any of the supporting teeth get cavities or gum disease. It pains me to think of how many bridges we have had to remake or remove for patients because a single tooth supporting the bridge got a cavity. Therein lays the problem, if one tooth fails you, the whole bridge is usually lost. Partial can also go bad or get loose very quickly if any of the supporting teeth get weak.

There are many factors and considerations in replacing a single tooth. Meet with your dentist so that you can choose the option best for you.

-Please send comments to Drs. Parrish at www.ParrishDental.com.