



As an oral surgeon, Dr. Neshat performs a range of procedures including dental implants, jaw reconstruction, and—as he is doing here—removal of wisdom teeth.

At the age of 27, when he first came to see Dr. Kevin Neshat at the Dental Implant Center of North Carolina, Steve carried with him a vivid memory of the day 17 years earlier when, as a Little League third baseman, a one-hop line drive careened toward him and hit him squarely in the mouth.

“Three front teeth were damaged as a result of this trauma,” notes Dr. Neshat, who is an oral and maxillofacial surgeon. “The teeth were pushed back into the patient’s mouth—and subsequently were pulled back into position by an orthodontist. Later, almost certainly because of this event, an endodontist performed root canals on these three teeth. The basic purpose of root canal treatment is to create an end result where the tissues surrounding a tooth’s root maintain a healthy status despite the fact that the tooth’s nerve has undergone degenerative changes—in this instance, because of trauma.

“Now, 17 years later, Steve came to me because these three front teeth were becoming loose. He was at a loss to understand what was happening to his

down to act as anchors for the bridge.

“A partial denture is another choice, with three artificial teeth held in place by a large and cumbersome plastic device. A consequence of this approach is a significant loss of taste in the mouth, because a great many taste buds are in the roof of the mouth—with the added possibility of discomfort while chewing and a change in speech patterns.”

**FAR BETTER CHOICE**

Dental implants, says Dr. Neshat with understandable enthusiasm, “offer a patient such as Steve a far better option. The procedure was straightforward, and the results were exceptional. We removed these three damaged teeth, and immediately, at the time of extractions, placed three implants exactly where the three teeth had been removed. We were then able to place temporary teeth in these locations, so that the patient left the office with teeth in place that were aesthetically pleasing.

“Five months later, after complete healing of the surgical site, we exposed the implants and Steve’s general

the crown. Essentially, a dental implant is a new root. This titanium root is fitted into a socket that we create in the patient’s jaw, replacing the lost root of the natural tooth.

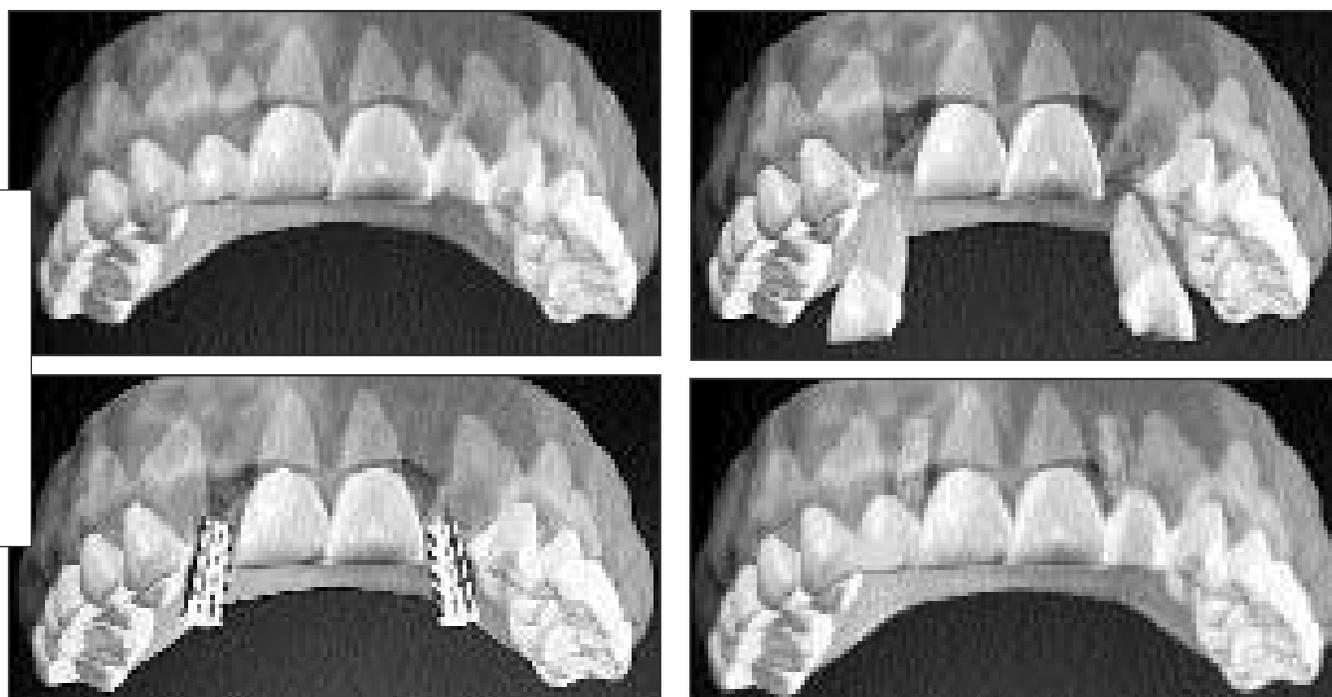
“Once an implant has been placed in the jaw, the bone around the implant needs to heal for some period of time. The next step is placing a support post called an abutment into the implant itself, and then a new crown, or replacement tooth is placed on top. It actually fits right on the abutment.

“As recently as a year ago, we would place the implant into the jaw and wait for six months for it to bind with the bone, and then place a temporary tooth and let it heal for awhile, and then finally place the permanent tooth on the abutment. It was a lengthy process, for patient and dentist alike.

“Now, depending on the location of the tooth in the mouth, we can do the extraction and in the same procedure place the implant posts in the jaw bone—and in some cases, we can place temporary teeth at the same time so the patient is never left without a tooth.”

Such a major step forward is

overcoming  
trauma with  
implants



Graphics show process for placing implants, ranging from extraction, to placing implant abutments, to final placing of new crowns.

teeth, and what he could do about it.

“What we discovered together, as we studied X-rays of these teeth, is that his body had started resorbing the roots of these three teeth as the result of that long-ago trauma. Resorbing means loss of tooth root structure, with limited viable options. In the past, a dental bridge would have been considered a solution, held in place by cutting down two or three teeth on the right and left of these three teeth to provide an anchor for the bridge. The consequence is that six naturally beautiful and healthy teeth would have to be cut

dentist, who had referred him to us, was able to place the permanent, perfect teeth on the implant posts,” as illustrated in the series of photos with this article.

Dental implants, explains Dr. Neshat, “function much as do real teeth. A natural tooth consists of a root and a crown. The part of the tooth that you see and eat with is called the crown.

“Beneath the crown is the root, which anchors the tooth through the gum tissue to the jawbone. When you lose a tooth, you lose both the root and

possible, says Dr. Neshat, “because of greatly increased understanding of how the bone and the body heal around an implant, because our surgical technique is much improved, and because implant companies have made great strides in their products. Added together, this all means we are enjoying success with dental implants at the 95 percent level or higher.”

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