

Home » Health » Exciting Innovations in Periodontics

HEALTH

Exciting Innovations in Periodontics



By Brian — November 18, 2023

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By Philip L. Fava II, DMD, MDSc

The overall field of dentistry has come a long way from the days of yore when our ancestors attempted to clean their teeth and gums by rubbing them with rags, scraping them with twigs, or maybe chewing on fish bones! It's a thrill to be part of a discipline where each decade brings even greater advancements. Some of our favorite highlights of general dentistry and periodontics through the decades include:

Starting With Water Fluoridation

Community water fluoridation was first introduced in Michigan in the middle of the 20th century. Today, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), nearly 70% of the U.S. benefits from this medical breakthrough that has so greatly assisted us all, supporting healthy tooth enamel and, according to the American Public Health Association, preventing at least 25% of tooth decay in children and adults. The CDC considers water fluoridation one of the “10 greatest public health achievements of the 20th century,” and we agree, ranking this achievement right up there with vaccinations, motor-vehicle safety, tobacco control, cancer prevention and more.

Cavity Detection Gets Better

Dental radiographs (x-rays) provide dental professionals with a view into your mouth that the naked eye can't always see, like changes in soft and hard tissues and developing caries (cavities) under previous restorations or between teeth. First introduced to the public in the 1950s and remaining largely the same for decades, these traditional oral x-rays helped pave the way for today's more advanced digital radiography and intra-oral scanning technologies.

These newer techniques help us offer faster results, better imaging and a more comfortable and overall better patient experience with less radiation exposure and no toxic chemicals required to develop film. Today's panoramic radiography equipment includes cutting-edge cone-beam computed tomography (CBCT). Convenient and non-invasive, these 3D scans allow for quick and precisely detailed images of bone and soft tissue structure, images that are invaluable to us for diagnosing purposes.

Immediate/Immediate Loading of Dental Implants

If, unfortunately, you've lost your natural teeth, dentures are removable appliances that do offer an affordable way of "replacing" teeth. This option, however, comes with a plethora of disadvantages including the need for messy adhesive application and other potential issues like difficulty chewing and speaking properly, appliance slippage and jawbone deterioration.

Dental implants, on the contrary, are surgically placed in the jaw and replicate your natural (missing) tooth root. The

process of osseointegration means that the surgically placed titanium post fuses with your jawbone, creating a strong anchor which holds a replacement tooth. Whether replacing one tooth or providing for an entire mouth's restoration, dental implants are a tooth replacement solution that requires no special care. You'll chew and speak properly without slippage or the need for adhesives. You'll care for your dental implants just like you do natural teeth. Also, the implants help you also preserve the integrity of your jawbones and facial structure.

Today and Beyond

Many periodontists routinely utilize laser-assisted periodontal treatment for gum disease (LANAP®) and intraoral scanners to plan procedures. Some practices now employ robotics with haptic guidance. We can harness the power of your own body by using your own bone tissue to organically enhance jawbones and help you heal faster to provide the support you may need for future dental implants. It's even possible to accelerate orthodontic movement in adults, helping eliminate crooked smiles in less time.

We've come a long way since modern nylon toothbrushes were introduced in the first part of the 20th century. We're continually seeing and implementing exciting developments that help make our patient experiences even more comfortable and precise. Today, the negative effects of poor oral health on our entire bodies are being studied, with numerous reports pointing to a distinct relationship between our gum and tooth health and systemic disease. Dentistry in general, (which is virtually painless today I should add!), has indeed come a long way. We look forward to next-level enhancements that continue to change the face of periodontics to help us serve our patients with even greater comfort, safety, convenience and the best clinical outcomes.

Dr. Philip L. Fava, II is a periodontist and dental implant surgeon who practices at the [Pennsylvania Center for Dental Implants and Periodontics](#), with two locations at Einstein Center One, Suite 211-212, 9800 Bustleton Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19115 and 140 East Butler Avenue, Ambler, PA 19002. The practice offers "All-on-4™ dental implants; SameDay Smile® or "Smile Zone" dental implants; single implant, crown and bridge implant restorations; Pinhole® gum

rejuvenation; reconstructive dental surgery, as well as LANAP® and other treatments for gum disease.



Brian



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