



Health & Wellness

Why You Should Choose a Periodontist for Your Best Dental Implant Experience

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By Eric Schoenebeck, DMD

Periodontists focus on keeping your teeth healthy. They diagnose and address gum disease or replace teeth if needed with today's latest dental implant procedures, with minimally invasive techniques, using today's most advanced technology. They know how to place dental implants in the perfect position for fast healing and long-term success.

Avoid Issues by Choosing Right the First Time

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Unfortunately, some patients seek a periodontist's help only after implants obtained elsewhere are failing and need replacement. In some instances, the implants were simply not correctly placed, were incorrectly sized or sub-standard connecting posts (abutments) were used. Maybe there was an insufficient number of implants utilized to hold a dental bridge. The original implant surgery was probably not handled by a professional implant surgeon.

Specialties Count

In decades past, you may have visited your general medical practitioner for a heart condition, a broken arm, or a severe eye infection. Today, you'd be referred to a cardiologist, orthopedic surgeon, and ophthalmic practitioner for those same issues. You fully understand that these specialists have advanced knowledge in their particular fields.

The truth is that any licensed dentist can legally place implants. While you may feel very comfortable with your regular dentist, a weekend course in dental implants and a handful of implant surgeries won't match the experience and know-how of a gum, tooth, and jawbone specialist like a periodontist. Periodontists have diagnostic and procedural expertise and are fully trained and experienced in dental implant surgery. They're the experts in related surgeries like bone grafts, ridge augmentation, and even sinus lifts. It's what they do, every day.

Five Questions to Ask a Prospective Dental Practitioner

If someone other than a periodontist or oral surgeon offers to handle your dental implant surgery, consider asking these questions:

1. How many dental implants have they placed? The answer should be hundreds, and perhaps thousands. You don't want a practice that CAN place implants but doesn't on a daily basis. Periodontists continually see the results of incorrectly placed implants in the form of increased infection and jawbone loss, results that could have been avoided if the implant was properly placed in the first place.
2. What kind of education have they received to ensure they are specialists in this field?
3. What's their experience in immediate load versus traditional placement, in single-tooth implants versus crown and bridge implants? How about esthetic zone (front of mouth) implants?
4. What other procedures does the practitioner address? Someone straightening teeth and filling cavities all day can't possibly provide you with the sort of know-how required to tackle precise dental implant surgery.
5. Does the practice show you online reviews specifying great experiences with dental implant placement? How about patient video testimonials?

Consider Long-Term Goals

Periodontists understand that many patients have developed strong rapport with their regular dentists and would hope this practitioner could handle all their oral health needs. However, in the same way most dentists will recommend you see an endodontist for a root canal or suggest that you visit an orthodontist for teeth straightening, they will commonly refer you to an expert in dental implants for lost or failing teeth. Most restorative dental partners will agree that dental implants placed by well-intentioned but inexperienced practitioners could end up causing you more money, time, and aggravation in the long run.

Buyer Beware

Does the price sound too good to be true? Advertising, unfortunately, can be misleading. In order to offer an enticing "deal", the practitioner is probably cutting corners somewhere in terms of components or lab relationships. Will you be pressured into making fast decisions? Are they making every possible effort to save your natural teeth first?

Traveling Abroad

There surely are reputable practitioners in lovely vacation destinations. But trying to mix sun and surf with serious periodontal surgery can raise many red flags. What happens if you can't communicate thoroughly with the office staff? What if complications occur after you return home – where do you go? Who will you see for follow-up care?

The Bottom Line:

If you need a dental implant, choose the professional dental practitioner who places dental implants every week, not someone who simply CAN place an implant. Don't fall for financial marketing incentives or simply use a specialist who is geographically convenient, or one with whom you are "comfortable" since they've filled cavities for you or straightened your teeth.

The additional training and ongoing, hands-on, daily experience of a periodontist can mean the difference between a replacement tooth that looks good for a few months and then fails, and one that can last a lifetime. Do your homework!

Dr. Eric Schoenebeck is a board-certified periodontist who practices with the [Pennsylvania Center for Dental Implants and Periodontics](#). The practice currently maintains two convenient Pennsylvania locations in Philadelphia and Ambler.

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