

Be VERY Careful When Replacing Missing Teeth



By [Dr. Lina Garcia](#)

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A dental implant is one option for replacing missing or badly diseased teeth. It is composed of an artificial root that looks like a post or screw and is covered with a dental crown.

Treatment involves the surgical placement of the implant into the jawbone, where it is allowed to fuse to the bone in a process called “osseointegration.”

Once healed, the implant acts as an anchor for an artificial replacement tooth, or crown. The crown is made to blend in with your other teeth and is permanently attached to the implant.

A typical dental implant is made of pure titanium and/or a titanium alloy.

In fact, titanium alloys are widely used in both medicine and dentistry, for dental implants, pacemakers, stents, orthodontal brackets, and orthopedic implants (e.g., hip, shoulder, knee, or elbow). Not only is titanium strong, but many consider it biocompatible: it forms an oxide layer when exposed to air, and this purportedly results in reduced corrosion and superior osseointegration.

So why should you reject the standard titanium metal implant?

Titanium is NOT Biologically Inert

Titanium implants release metal ions into your mouth 24 hours a day, and this chronic exposure may trigger inflammation, allergies, and autoimmune disease in susceptible individuals. They are a precursor to disease.

Cases of intolerance to metal implants have been reported over the years, and the removal of this incompatible dental material has resulted in reduced metal sensitivity and long-term health improvement in the majority of patients.

Titanium has the potential to induce hypersensitivity as well as other immunological dysfunctions.

One study investigated 56 patients who developed severe health problems after receiving titanium-based dental implants. These medical problems included muscle, joint, and nerve pain; chronic fatigue syndrome; neurological problems; depression; and skin inflammation.

Removal of the implants resulted in a dramatic improvement in the patients' symptoms, as well as a decrease in many patients' sensitivity to titanium.

For example, a 54-year-old man with a titanium dental implant and four titanium screws in his vertebra was so sick that he could not work. He suffered from chronic fatigue syndrome, cognitive impairment, Parkinson-like trembling, and severe depression. Six months after the removal of the implants and screws, he was able to return to work.

In another case, a 14-year-old girl developed inflammatory lesions on her face six months after being fitted with titanium orthodontal brackets.

She was also mentally and physically exhausted, and her reactivity to titanium skyrocketed. Within nine months of replacing the brackets with a metal-free material, her facial lesions had almost completely healed, she was healthy and active, and her sensitivity to titanium returned to a normal level.

Titanium Implants Can Cause Cancer

Another complication of the use of implanted titanium is its potential to induce the abnormal proliferation of cells (neoplasia), which can lead to the development of

malignant tumors and cancer. Through rare, it is a well-known complication of orthopedic surgery that involves the implantation of metallic hardware.

Furthermore, researchers recently uncovered the first reported case of a sarcoma arising in association with a dental implant.

As described in the August 2008 issue of *JADA (The Journal of the American Dental Association)*, a 38-year-old woman developed bone cancer eleven months after receiving a titanium dental implant. Luckily, she was successfully treated with chemotherapy, but the authors recommended further research into the tumor-causing potential of dental implants in light of their increasing popularity and their ability to last for longer periods of time.

Why You Want to Avoid ANY Kind of Metal in Your Mouth



Finally, the presence of any metal in your mouth sets the stage for “galvanic toxicity,” because your mouth essentially becomes a charged battery when dissimilar metals sit in a bed of saliva.

All that is needed to make a battery is two or more different metals and a liquid medium that can conduct electricity (i.e., an electrolyte). Metal implants, fillings, crowns, partials, and orthodontics provide the dissimilar metals, and the saliva in your mouth serves as the electrolyte.

An electric current called a galvanic current is then generated by the transport of the metal ions from the metal-based dental restorations into the saliva. This phenomenon is called “oral galvanism,” and it literally means that your mouth is acting like a small car battery or a miniature electrical generator. The currents can actually be measured using an ammeter!

Oral galvanism creates two major concerns.

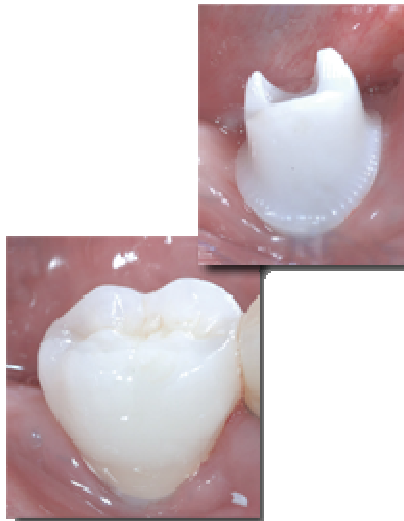
First, the electric currents increase the rate of corrosion (or dissolution) of metal-based dental restorations. Even precious metal alloys continuously release metal ions into your mouth due to corrosion, a process that gnaws away bits of metal from the metal's surface.

These ions react with other components of your body, leading to sensitivity, inflammation, and, ultimately, autoimmune disease. Increasing the corrosion rate, therefore, increases the chance of developing immunologic or toxic reactions to the metals.

Second, some individuals are very susceptible to these internal electrical currents. Dissimilar metals in your mouth can cause unexplained pain, nerve shocks, ulcerations, and inflammation, and many people also experience a constant metallic or salty taste, or a burning sensation in their mouth.

Moreover, there is the concern that oral galvanism directs electrical currents into brain tissue and can disrupt the natural electrical current in your brain.

New Alternatives to Titanium Implants



In recent years, high-strength ceramic implants have become attractive alternatives to titanium implants, and some current research has focused on the viability of materials such as zirconia (the dioxide of zirconium, a metal close to titanium on the periodic table).

Metal-free zirconia implants have been used in Europe and South America for years, but they have only recently become available in the U.S.

Zirconia implants are highly biocompatible to the human body and exhibit minimum ion release compared to metallic implants.

Studies have shown that the osseointegration of zirconia and titanium implants are very similar, and that zirconia implants have a comparable survival rate, thereby making them an excellent alternative to metal implants.

Moreover, zirconia ceramics have been successfully used in orthopedic surgery to manufacture ball heads for total hip replacements.

Therefore, given that titanium dental implants can induce metal sensitivity, inflammation, autoimmunity, and malignant tumors, while zirconia implants are metal-free but just as durable, why invite chronic metal exposure?

Your body would surely benefit from choosing the biocompatible, ceramic dental implant over the standard, titanium metal implant.

[Dr. Lina Garcia](#), a committed holistic dentist for 25 years, has dedicated her practice to using dental materials that will support your health and not disease. In her practice, she offers only metal-free restorative materials, including zirconia implants.

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Dr. Mercola's Comments:

First, I'd like to thank Dr. Garcia for this excellent review of the problems with metal dental implants, and the emergence of zirconium, which appears to be a far healthier alternative to traditional metal implants.

It goes without saying that your aim should be to avoid getting to the point where an implant is necessary, but if the damage is already done, or if you have an acute oral trauma, you now at least have some information that can help you make safer, healthier choices.

The impact your oral health has on the rest of your body is often overlooked, but that does not make it any less important. Likewise, any work you have done to your teeth can have a serious impact on your health, which I'll go over shortly.

Having a healthy set of teeth is a powerful predictor of your overall health. In my experience, sick patients who display near cavity-free teeth tend to get well fairly quickly. If, on the other hand, their mouths are full of fillings and root canals, the prognosis is not nearly as good.

The Link Between Oral Health and Disease

In the 1900s, Dr. Weston A. Price did extensive research on the link between oral health and physical diseases. He was one of the [major nutritional pioneers of all time](#), and his research is just as relevant today as it was back then.

He discovered that native tribes that still ate their traditional diet had nearly perfect teeth and were almost 100 percent free of tooth decay. Certain diseases were also nearly unheard of, such as chronic diseases of the heart, lungs, kidneys, liver, joints, and skin – the types of diseases currently plaguing our society.

Once these tribal populations were introduced to sugar and white flour, their health, and their perfect teeth, rapidly deteriorated.

His classic book [Nutrition and Physical Degeneration](#) details his fascinating findings and is well worth reading.

There's no doubt that our modern diet has changed the inherent health of our teeth and our bodies, and is the cause of nearly all our modern health challenges.

Today it's quite rare to find an adult with teeth that has not been marred by dental work of some kind, from mercury amalgams (silver fillings) to crowns, to root canals and bridges and implants.

If you eat properly and maintain optimal health, you're highly unlikely to develop cavities. They really only occur when you're eating the wrong foods, and growing up, I did not eat the right foods. As a result, I, as so many others, had a mouth full of mercury fillings.

I eventually had them replaced with gold fillings, only to later realize that gold fillings and crowns cause problems too. So after I'd already made an investment of several thousand dollars, I decided to replace them all again. This time with non-metal crowns, for the most part.

Conventional Versus Biological Dentistry

Unfortunately, conventional dentistry has generally only evaluated materials to be used for their mechanical characteristics, in large part ignoring the impact that particular material might have on the rest of your body.

Case in point: silver fillings, which are 50 percent mercury, an extremely potent neurotoxin, have been used for over 150 years. Likewise, the fact that various metals have been used for years to fashion tooth implants is by no means an indication of safety.

We are currently fighting to have mercury fillings banned completely in the U.S., as it has been in some other European countries, and hope to be able to get this toxic material off the market in the near future. Until then, it's up to you to refuse them, or find a dentist who has switched to safer alternatives.

My own struggles with my teeth led me to learn about in the mid 1990s and embrace biological dentistry, also known as holistic or environmental dentistry.

In a nutshell, biological dentistry views your teeth and gums as an integrated part of your entire body, and any medical treatments performed takes this fact into account. The primary aim of this type of holistic dentistry is to resolve your dental problems while impacting the rest of your body as little as possible.

Unknowingly, your health can be significantly impacted by the treatments received at your conventional dentist's office. Oftentimes the impact is just not immediately noticeable.

Implants Can Exacerbate Autoimmune Diseases

Currently, implants continue to be done without biocompatibility testing, and they are often used in extraction sites where cavitations (inflammation) are already developing.

Autoimmune diseases seem to be often aggravated or even initiated by metal implants.

Additionally, an event called oral galvanism occurs when you place two dissimilar metals in your mouth. You essentially create a battery that will serve to drive the ions of the metals out of the metal into your mouth and also generate electricity.

You may not realize it, but tiny electrical currents are foundational to the way your body operates biologically, and when you introduce a foreign source of electricity, especially one that is constantly there, you can introduce imbalances that can contribute to health problems.

This galvanic toxicity created when the metal in your mouth reacts with your saliva can over-stimulate your brain. This is true whether the metal in your mouth is a silver filling, a metal crown, or a metal dental implant.

Common signs and symptoms of galvanic toxicity include:

- A metal taste in your mouth
- A sensation of an electric charge when using metal utensils
- Chronic insomnia

Finding suitable materials to replace the metals currently used is proving to be a challenge. However, based on Dr. Garcia's review of zirconium, you may now have access to a far better option if you need to have an entire tooth replaced.

Hopefully, by implementing the strategies below, it will never get to that point.

Health Implications of Cavities and Root Canals

Dental caries (cavities) is a reflection of systemic illness in your body. And, if you let it go long enough to where the cavity gets into the nerve and blood vessels, bacteria can hide in the tiny tubules of the dentin, causing chronic inflammation and infection that is near impossible to eradicate. So, never ignore signs like a toothache or a cavity.

Also remember that they are major clues that your body is not optimally healthy and lifestyle changes are in order if you want to stop or reverse the damage that is already taking place.

As for root canals, nearly all contain colonies of bacteria that can cause major illnesses in your body. Even antibiotics won't help in these cases, because the bacteria are protected inside of your dead tooth. And when these bacteria migrate, via your bloodstream to other areas of your body, they can contribute to or cause more serious ailments such as:

- Heart and circulatory diseases
- Arthritis and rheumatism
- Brain and nervous system diseases

Attending to your dental health is just as important as eating right and exercising for physical health. The two are connected, not separate systems, and each affects the other.

Do You Know What Makes for Healthy Teeth?

Although many would like to believe that regular brushing and flossing is all that's needed for healthy teeth, it's by no means the most important factor determining your oral health. Others insist [fluoride](#) is the key. Don't believe it! The most important aspect is actually your diet, sans [fluoridated water](#).

Hygiene practices are simply preventive aids that help minimize the destructive effect of a modern, refined diet, and fluoride causes far more health problems than it's believed to fix.

Another alternative to conventional dental fillings worth mentioning is [tooth regeneration](#). The materials used for this procedure include solutions of chemicals that can actually rebuild decayed teeth. Enamel and dentin, the natural materials that make teeth the strongest pieces of your body, may some day replace conventional fillings.

Although this would certainly be a step up from using toxic substances like mercury to fill your teeth, it's still a type of band aid.

If you want to have healthy teeth, and a similarly healthy body, you must start from the inside out, and that means cleaning up your diet.

Healthy Diet, Healthy Teeth

When Dr. Price studied native diets, he noticed certain similarities in the foods that were keeping them so healthy. Among them:

- The foods were natural, unprocessed, and organic (and contained no sugar except for the occasional bit of honey or maple syrup).
- The people ate foods that grew in their native environment. In other words, they ate locally grown, seasonal foods.
- Many of the cultures ate [unpasteurized dairy products](#), and all of them ate fermented foods.
- The people ate a significant portion of their food raw.

- All of the cultures ate animal products, including animal fat and, often, full-fat butter and organ meats.

When Dr. Price analyzed his findings, he found that the native diets contained 10 times the amount of fat-soluble vitamins, and at least four times the amount of calcium, other minerals, and water-soluble vitamins as that of Western diets at that time. Their diets were also rich in enzymes because they ate fermented and raw foods (enzymes help you to digest cooked foods).

The native diets also had at least 10 times more omega-3 fat than modern diets and FAR less omega-6 fats. And as some of you may know, a diet that is lacking in omega-3 fats, and heavy on omega-6 fats from vegetable oils (which are consumed so heavily today) is a recipe for disaster.

So, if you want to eat your way to healthy teeth, taking a lesson from these previous native generations is essential. You should:

- Find out your [nutritional type](#), and eat accordingly. This will tell you which foods are ideal for your unique biochemistry.
- Eat at least [one-third of your food raw](#).
- Avoid processed foods, sugar, refined flour and all artificial flavorings, colorings, and artificial sweeteners. Instead, seek out [locally grown foods](#) that are in-season.
- Enjoy [fermented foods](#) like natto, kefir and cultured veggies.
- Make sure you [eat enough healthy fats](#), including those from animal sources like [omega-3 fat](#), and reduce your intake of omega-6 from vegetable oils.

All of the brushing and flossing in the world will not give you the healthy teeth that the above steps will, so if you value your pearly whites, [get started eating a healthier diet today](#).

Find a Good Biological Dentist

Everyone needs a good dental consultant and, unfortunately, they are hard to find. There is no shortage of competent skilled caring dentists, but there is of ones who believe in the principles I outlined above.

There are several strategies you can use to locate one. Ideally you would ask a friend, relative or neighbor who knows of one. If that fails you can contact several good natural health food stores in your area and ask a number of the employees or even the owner. Once you obtain the same name a number of times that is typically a good sign.

Additionally there are organizations like [D.A.M.S](#) and [International Academy of Oral Medicine and Toxicology](#) that have referral setups.