

## John Hackbarth: Dentures in a day are complicated

A new patient came to see me and was sick and tired of dealing with her bad teeth. She had three options after the removal of her bad teeth:

Do nothing, and have no teeth forever

Wait three to six months after the bone healed and get dentures

Replace the bad teeth with dentures the day the teeth are removed

The patient chose to have same-day dentures. The results speak for themselves. For almost 100 years this process has been called immediate or healing dentures. Marketing techniques have changed the term into dentures-in-a-day as you can see on TV.

The purpose of this article is for the reader to get an idea of how most dentures-in-a-day work.

**First**—It is important to know the denture has to be made, in its entirety, prior to the teeth being removed.

In order to have custom-made, prefabricated dentures, extremely accurate impressions need to be taken before the teeth are removed. To get an idea of what is necessary for proper impressions, take your tongue and roll it around the roof of your mouth, all upper and lower teeth, upper and lower cheeks and anything else the tongue can touch has to be recorded. The molds have to perfectly duplicate everything.

It is also important to have an accurate record of how the upper and lower jaws fit together. This is not always easy when the remaining teeth are broken and worn and have many missing. The doctor will also have to help you decide on a color and tooth style for your new teeth.

The upper jaw is a part of the skull and is fixed, while the lower jaw is the bone that does all the moving. It is connected to the skull by two joints, muscles, tendons, ligaments and the skin of your face. The laboratory technician, the one who actually makes your teeth, has to know exactly how that particular person's jaw opens and closes. If the impressions are not accurate and the bite registration is not right, it will be a disaster for everyone.

The laboratory steps are complicated and boring, but the end result is upper and lower dentures made for the patient and to the dentist's specifications.

On the delivery day the patient is prepared for surgery by numbing the mouth. Some patients also choose to be sedated. The teeth are then removed, the bone is smoothed, sutures are placed if needed and the dentures are inserted and adjusted.

The procedure is a very emotional experience for both the doctor, team and patient. Once the teeth are gone there is no going back. As a dentist, even with years and years of experience, there is always a small amount of worry that something has gone wrong with the denture making process. It is always wonderful to see the uppers and lowers slip right in giving the outcome you see in the photos.

**Second**—Not everyone is the same and not every dentist is the same. Dentures -in-a-day should be done by experienced dentists who work with experienced technicians who are versed in making dentures. All dentures-in-a-day, in fact all dentures, are 100% customized the just that one person. If it doesn't look right, it's not right. If the bite is not right, the denture is not right.

**Third**—The immediate/healing denture had one main purpose: to give a person teeth to smile with until all bone healing has taken place. In six to 18 months the existing denture should be replaced. The length of time depends on how the bone heals. We have also found that having dentures-in-a-day also helps a person adjust to wearing a prosthetic.

**Fourth**—Having a trusting relationship between the patient and the dentist is important. The patient needs to be aware of each step, and have all the benefits and pitfalls explained. In my experience, it is always best to expect to have a new set of dentures made after everything is healed.

This procedure is one of the most rewarding as well as one of the most complicated dental procedures.