

## Prosthodontists: The Tooth Replacement Specialists

For patients considering tooth replacement with dental implants, who do not have a dentist of record, the first step should be a consultation with a Prosthodontist. Why a Prosthodontist? The answer is simple. Prosthodontists are the experts in tooth replacement, with three years of additional training following dental school in the restoration and replacement of missing teeth.

As the “architects” on the team of dental specialists, Prosthodontists develop the treatment plan that will produce the optimal esthetic and functional results for each individual patient. Extensive training and experience provide Prosthodontists with a thorough understanding of the type of tooth replacement that is best for each unique situation, including the most complex full-mouth reconstruction cases.

In addition to tooth replacement, Prosthodontists specialize in restoring teeth and are highly trained in advanced techniques and procedures for treating many complex conditions and restoring ideal function and esthetics, including: crowns, bridges, dentures, removable partial dentures, TMJ (joint) problems, traumatic injuries, and oral cancer reconstruction. Prosthodontists are extensively trained in the hands-on technical laboratory aspects involved in the fabrication of complex dental prostheses. It is this comprehensive knowledge of dental materials and techniques that optimizes both function and esthetics when it comes to providing treatment.

Whether patients are missing teeth, have significant damage to their teeth, congenital defects, or problems arising from trauma and neglect, a Prosthodontist is the specialist most qualified to evaluate their situation, discuss all of the options, and develop the personalized treatment plan that addresses the patients’ unique needs and desires.

Prosthodontists treat patients with the most complex dental needs, such as these two implant cases restored by Dr. Aldo Leopardi.



*Complex case with multiple missing teeth*



*Case restored with dental implants*



*Remaining teeth cannot be saved*



*Tooth replacement with dental implants*

## Why should patients interested in dental implants seek the advice of a Prosthodontist rather than a general dentist?

There are a number of general dentists who have a great deal of experience in implant dentistry. Many general dentists treat patients who need one, or a few implants, in conjunction with a surgical specialist on a regular basis. However, the vast majority of general dentists have relatively limited experience treating patients who are missing all of their teeth, or those with more complicated cases. These patients are usually referred to a Prosthodontist, who as a specialist, deals with complex cases on a daily basis.

Patients who need anterior tooth replacement will often be referred to Prosthodontists, since they have more training and experience with demanding esthetic situations. In fact, a single missing anterior can be one of the most challenging cases in implant dentistry.

A Prosthodontist is the most qualified specialist to develop the ideal treatment plan for tooth replacement with dental implants due to their extensive training and experience, particularly in the following situations:

- Patients with dentures
- Patients with several missing teeth
- Patients about to lose (or have already lost) a front tooth
- Patients with complex medical histories
- Patients with teeth that cannot be saved
- Patients with challenging esthetic issues

## Isn't it better to have implant treatment at a "super" center, where there is a team of specialists in the same facility?

First and foremost, it is important to understand that advertising the convenience of "super" centers is designed to sell the concept of a center. It is not objective information provided to educate potential patients. It is a business model. And while it is certainly more convenient to have everything under one roof, it is important to keep in mind that implant treatment involves surgical and complex prosthetic procedures. Therefore, the expertise of the doctors should be a more important consideration than convenience.

One of the major benefits of seeking treatment with an experienced Prosthodontist in private practice is that patients will receive information about all of their treatment options, allowing them to make educated decisions. The Prosthodontist in private practice will only be focused on the patients' unique needs and desires and the options that will be best for them, not a business model. Treatment options vary with individual needs. There is no standard, cookie-cutter treatment modality - every patient has their own individualized treatment planning process.

The Prosthodontist will also select the most qualified surgical specialist as part of the team to provide treatment. Together, they will determine if any of the natural teeth should be saved, the ideal number of implants and type of replacement teeth, and whether bone grafting is needed to provide optimal esthetics and function. Patients will also have the benefit of long-term maintenance and continuing care, which are benefits that are not typically provided in "super" centers.