

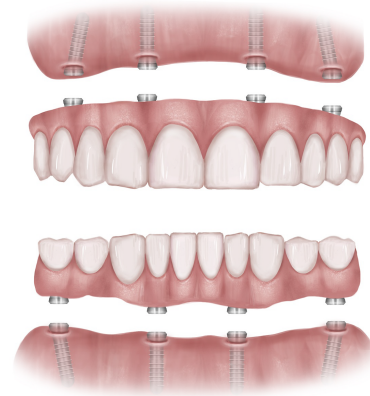
Implant “Super” Centers

There are implant centers springing up all over the country. To say that it can be confusing trying to determine whether the doctors in these centers are actually experts in implant dentistry is an understatement.

One national chain of implant centers that advertises regularly claims to be the leaders in implant dentistry, with more experience than any other practices in the country. This claim is based on the volume of dental implants placed and restored in all of their centers combined. This is an attempt to create the narrative that affiliation with the brand makes doctors experts whether they have a great deal of experience or not.

Other advertising claims include the convenience of having everything under one roof, affordability, and advanced technology that is not available anywhere else. Many of the ads and much of the promotional material state that implant treatment at these centers is superior to treatment provided by doctors in private practice. Patients should keep in mind that the advertising claims are intended to sell the services provided by the implant centers.

This chain promotes complete tooth replacement in one day with the All-on-4 treatment concept as part of its business model. This is a procedure that uses four strategically placed implants to support a full set of replacement teeth for each jaw. Two of the implants in each arch are placed at an angle to avoid the sinus cavities in the upper jaw and the large nerve running through the lower jaw (see illustration). Several “copy cat” implant centers, patterned after this national chain, have opened in various markets across the country, also promoting the All-on-4 procedure.



While All-on-4 is an option for some people, not everyone is a good candidate for this procedure. Therefore, patients considering complete tooth replacement at one of these centers should consult with a Prosthodontist in private practice, who makes recommendations that are patient-centered, as opposed to business-driven. This way, patients receive personalized treatment plans that are designed to meet their unique needs.

There are other so-called implant centers that are simply general dentists, using the term “center” as part of a marketing strategy to attract dental implant patients. A number of large group practices of general dentists hire traveling surgical specialists to place dental implants in their offices and promote their practices as implant centers. Neither of these business models represents true centers for implant dentistry.

The benefit most often promoted by all these implant centers is the convenience of having everything provided under one roof. This generally includes the surgical and restorative procedures, as

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well as the 3D imaging for diagnostics and case planning. While it is certainly convenient for patients to have treatment provided in one location, surgery is involved in dental implant treatment, and therefore the experience and credentials of the doctor performing the surgical procedures should be the primary consideration, as opposed to convenience.

In contrast, the private practice team approach, involves a surgical specialist (Oral Surgeon or Periodontist) and a Prosthodontist or general dentist that all collaborate to provide personalized treatment options for the patients' overall oral health and unique needs. This team concept offers patients more choices, as well as optimal treatment outcomes.

The chart below shows a comparison of these "super" centers to the private practice team approach to implant dentistry.

| Traditional Team Approach vs. Implant "Super" Centers | |
|---|--|
| Traditional Team Approach | Implant "Super" Centers |
| 20-40 year success rate of 97% | 5-10 year success rate of 97%* |
| Personalized treatment plans to meet patient's unique needs and desires | One treatment option for all patients to fit a business model |
| Teeth evaluated to determine if they can be saved with a good prognosis | All remaining teeth are extracted for complete tooth replacement with implants |
| Treatment plan takes overall dental health into consideration | Treatment plan only takes dental implants into consideration |
| Family dentists remain involved | Centers bypass family dentists |
| Hygienists, specialists, general dentists provide ongoing follow-up/maintenance | No follow-up care/maintenance provided |
| Team of dental specialists: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Prosthodontists · Oral Surgeons · Periodontists | Team of dental specialists: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Prosthodontists · Oral Surgeons |
| Number of implants determined by patients' functional requirements | With 4 implants in each arch - if 1 implant is lost denture/bridge cannot be placed |
| Multiple treatment options with range of fees to fit patients' budgets | One treatment plan with one fee - less costly options are not discussed |
| * Most implant "super" centers have only been open since 2007 | |