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## Laughing Out Loud

### **Small-diameter implants hold dentures in place when talking, eating or laughing.**

Meleah Gray has worn dentures for 20 years. Over time, the bone in her bottom jaw wore away, making it difficult to keep those dentures in place.



Meleah feels secure about her denture now.

As a result, she became much more self-conscious when she talked, ate and even laughed because she feared the dentures flying out of her mouth.

Meleah manages a storage facility and is face to face with people all day long. When her situation caused her to want to shy away from talking to people, she knew it was time to do something about it.

“I was constantly battling with the loose denture.” she explains. “I didn’t feel like I could talk to my customers with confidence. I could not laugh or be jovial with friends. I wanted to go on a thrill ride and scream with my mouth wide open. It was a defining issue with me, especially when my job was affected.

“I did some research on solutions, and I read that implants can help hold the denture in place. So, I looked for a reputable dentist nearby and found Dr. Leong.”

#### **A firm hold**

Meleah met with Richard Leong, Jr., DDS, of Melbourne, who recommended four small-diameter implants along her bottom jaw.

“Many patients who already have a denture have lost much of the bone in the jawline,” Dr. Leong explains. “This is a common problem. As the bone shrinks away, the shape of the mouth changes. Therefore, there is less suction, and they cannot hold their denture in their mouth. They are afraid to go out in public, afraid to eat. It’s really life-changing for many.

“If all a patient needs is to get the denture to stay in place, these smaller implants are ideal,” he continues. “They are typically for patients who do not need bone grafting done. These smaller posts can even hold single implants, as well as a small bridge or partial denture.

There are a lot of uses for these implants if used correctly and if there is still a sufficient amount of bone intact.”



A dental implant is a metal anchor surgically implanted in the jawbone. Implants support individual artificial teeth, bridges and dentures. Once the anchor is placed, patients then wait for the bone to heal completely before the new prosthesis is attached. The implant takes the place of the bone structure to hold the prosthesis in the mouth. Implant-supported prostheses look and feel much like natural teeth.

“When the process is completed with precision, people can retain the denture immediately,” Dr. Leong explains. “They can walk out of an appointment and the denture is securely in place. It’s amazing. I’ve performed many of these implant procedures in Nicaragua, for example, where people line up to have them done because they want so badly to have their teeth stay in their mouths instead of falling out all the time. My job is very rewarding.”

### Above the rest

During more than four decades as a dentist, Dr. Leong has implemented many leading-edge advancements in implantology in his own practice. In addition, he regularly develops new techniques.

“I teach dental implants, so I strive to have the latest methods, procedures and techniques,” he explains. “My office is equipped with all of the latest technology available. We are very high-tech, and I want to get the point across that I do a lot more than just cleanings or fillings. I specialize in comprehensive dentistry.

“Not every dentist out there can say they do that and do it well,” he continues. “When I evaluate a patient, I look at the complete medical history to see if they are candidates for what I have planned. That’s why we say we offer comprehensive care here.”

Meleah is nothing short of thrilled that she has regained the confidence she once lost.

“I can eat, talk, smile and laugh without fear [of the denture falling out] now,” she says. “I talk to a lot of people all day long in my job. Now, I can do so without worrying my denture is going to come out. No more embarrassment.”



She credits Dr. Leong and his staff for changing her life. In the future, she hopes to be able to have the same procedure done for her top denture.

“His personable care was far above any other dentist I’ve seen,” Meleah raves. “He took his time with me and explained everything. He never pressured me at all. I felt confident in his abilities, and his staff was absolutely phenomenal. I highly recommend Dr. Leong to anyone looking for a reputable, caring, honest dentist.”

*FHCN article by Judy Wade. Photos by Nerissa Johnson.*

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