Dental Implant Feels Loose or Sore: What to Do Next

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Description:

Loose, sore or swollen dental implant? What it can mean, how specialists at Collins Street Specialist Centre assess it, and the options. Complimentary review, terms on page.

Details:

A dental implant that feels loose, sore or swollen does not always mean the implant itself has failed. Quite often the crown or the screw holding it has worked loose, which can usually be repaired. Sometimes the implant has lost its hold in the bone. An examination with x-rays tells the two apart, so book a review rather than waiting.

What signs mean my implant needs checking?

- The implant tooth moves or feels loose when you bite
- Pain, tenderness or a feeling of pressure around it
- Swelling, bleeding or pus from the gum
- The gum pulling back so that metal shows
- Food packing in, or a bad taste
- The crown or screw coming loose again and again

Until it has been looked at, avoid chewing on that side.

Why do implants get into trouble?

Problems fall into a few groups, and the timing gives a clue.

- Soon after surgery: the implant never joined with the bone. Bone quality, infection, heat during surgery, movement while healing and general health can all play a part.
- Years later: an implant that was working has lost bone, often from peri-implantitis, heavy biting forces or a crown that is hard to keep clean.
- Hardware: screws that loosen or break, crowns that crack and parts that wear. These can often be fixed with the implant left in place.
- Placement: an implant set at an angle or depth that makes it hard to restore or clean.

How do we work out what is wrong?

We start by hearing your history at a complimentary review with Dr Kia Pajouhesh, who is a general dentist and the practice principal here. That review is free, you do not have to book anything afterwards, and the offer does not expire; if you go on to specialist assessment or imaging, those carry fees that we explain before you book. After that we may:

- examine the implant, the gum around it and your bite
- take x-rays, and a 3D cone beam CT scan where the bone needs a closer look
- identify the implant system where possible, so matching parts can be found
- arrange assessment by a prosthodontist, an oral and maxillofacial surgeon or a periodontist, depending on what we find

What could treatment involve?

That depends on the cause. It might mean tightening or replacing a screw or part, remaking a crown so it fits and can be cleaned, treating infection and stabilising the bone, or adjusting your bite to take load off the implant. If the implant cannot be kept, it can be removed carefully, with a bone graft if needed, and a replacement planned once the area heals. A bridge or a denture is another route for some people. A problem implant does not always have to come out, and your specialist will set out the reasonable options with their benefits, risks and costs.

Who may be involved?

Prosthodontists Prof Vasileios Chronopoulos, Dr Fotios Angelis and Dr Jamie Foong (each with specialist registration in prosthodontics), oral and maxillofacial surgeon Dr Ricky Kumar (specialist registration in oral and maxillofacial surgery) and Dr Simon Hinckfuss (specialist registration in both periodontics and prosthodontics). Check any registration on the AHPRA register.

Frequently asked questions

Has my implant failed if it wobbles?

Not necessarily. The part that has loosened is often the crown or the screw rather than the implant in the bone, and an x-ray with an examination shows which one it is.

Can a failed implant be replaced?

In many cases, yes. The area usually needs time to heal first, and sometimes a bone graft, before a new implant goes in. Your specialist will tell you whether that suits your situation.

Will you look at an implant another dentist placed?

Yes. Bring whatever you know about the brand and size. If you do not have those details, we can often identify the implant from x-rays.

Results, recovery times and risks vary for each individual.

Book a review of your implant

Phone (03) 9650 2726 or email theteam@collinsstreetspecialistcentre.com.au to arrange a complimentary review at Level 8, Manchester Unity Building, 220 Collins Street, Melbourne.

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- All-on-4 and full-arch bridge problems
- Dental implant restoration (prosthodontics)
- Failing or failed dental implants on our website