



# Hot Topics

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## **DENTAL IMPLANTS RELATED TO BETTER HEALTH**

It has long been recognized that older, edentulous people have trouble consuming the kinds of nutritious foods necessary for health. Even those with dentures have trouble eating certain fruits and vegetables, and have limited chewing function. Mojon and others<sup>1</sup> found that elderly patients in long-term facilities with functional disabilities had lower body mass index and serum albumin concentrations, which are both signs of malnourishment.

With more than one-third of Americans over 65 completely edentulous, and the aging baby boomers about to increase that number, researchers have begun to study the relationship between implants and nutrition. In fact, they have found that implants allow the edentulous to eat the kinds of hard fruits, vegetables and nuts they would have been unable to consume before. This leads to a rise in health.

Allen and McMillan<sup>2</sup> found that patients who received implants modified their diets to include hard vegetables and fruits and nuts. Those who received conventional dentures did not modify their diets.

Dr. Irwin Becker, Chairman of the Department of Education at The Pankey Institute, says, "Implants can clearly help elderly people have happiness, especially during the time spent in senior facilities. They don't need the dexterity to care for implants that they would need for dentures. And the dental care and hygiene is often not sufficient in these facilities and therefore the implants do so much better, since they don't get decay or typical periodontal disease."

1. Mojon P, Budtz-Jorgansen E, Rapin CH. Relationship between oral health and nutrition in very old people. *Age Ageing* 1999; 28(5): 463-8.
  2. Allen PF, McMillan AS, Walshaw D. A patient-based assessment of implant-stabilized and conventional complete dentures. *J. Prosthet Dent* 2001; 85(2):141-7.
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