

Many Patients Opt for Full-Mouth Rehab

Question: “Dr. Arnold, my husband’s teeth are a disaster. He has broken teeth, missing teeth, huge old fillings, and his front teeth are dark, chipped, and crooked. He hasn’t seen a dentist in years, but I think that he is finally ready to do something. What can be done for him, and how much will it cost?”

Answer: Believe it or not, there are a lot of people with conditions very similar to his. Obviously, without doing a thorough examination with x-rays and models of his teeth, it’s impossible to make treatment recommendations or to give a fee estimate, but I will discuss some of the options utilized by patients in similar situations.

What can and should be done for him depends upon a multitude of variables. My first questions for him would be “what do you *want* to have done, and what are your goals for treatment?” If he is concerned about the appearance, position, function, strength, and replacement of missing teeth, then full-mouth rehabilitation might be a good option. Full-mouth rehabilitation is a common solution for “baby boomers” with this “assortment” of dental concerns.

Full-mouth rehabilitation is the process of rebuilding and replacing all of the teeth with crowns, veneers, bridges, and/or implants. This treatment is also common for patients who exhibit significant damage to all of their teeth due to abrasion (from grinding and/or clenching) or erosion (from gastric reflux or consumption of acidic beverages).

Restoring the teeth to their original beauty, form, and function has many benefits. When the teeth fit together properly, they enable you to chew more efficiently, they are easier to keep clean, and they give you confidence when you smile. This can often be accomplished in four or five appointments and will usually cost between forty and sixty thousand dollars.

There is no “one-size fits all” solution for everyone, however. Some people are content with having the back teeth restored without regard for the appearance of the front teeth. Others are more concerned with the appearance of the front teeth than they are with the function of the back teeth. The primary concern for the dental team should be to improve and maintain the oral health of the particular individual while trying to accommodate his or her wants and desires without compromise.

Sometimes, the dental condition is more complex and needs to be treated with a combination of several of the following: orthodontics, surgery, periodontics, removable appliances (partial or full dentures), or multiple implants with traditional crown and bridge restorations. These complex situations have the potential to cost anywhere from forty to one hundred thousand dollars to correct and sometimes require the expertise of a prosthodontic specialist.

The first step for your husband should be a comprehensive interview and examination by a dentist to determine his wants and needs. A good dental team will usually provide a list of options and the subsequent fees associated with each option.

Dr. Arnold practices dentistry in Chesterton and Valparaiso and is a clinical instructor with the Hornbrook Group, which teaches contemporary dental techniques to dentists from around the world. For more information on this or any other dental topic, please visit: www.SmilesByArnold.com. If you have questions for Dr. Arnold, please send an e-mail to: drarnold@smilesbyarnold.com or a letter to: 1830 South 11th St., Chesterton, IN, 46304.