

Pathophysiology and Treatment of Edentulism

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DESCRIPTION

Edentulism is a medical condition in which one or more teeth are missing or removed due to injury. It occurs more often in people from the lower end of the socioeconomic scale. It is of 2 types namely complete edentulism and partial edentulism. Complete edentulism is defined as the condition in which total loss of natural teeth is seen. Loss of one or two teeth is known as partial edentulism.

Causes

Although tooth loss is typically associated with the elderly, edentulism also affects children and adults if they do not practice proper oral hygiene.

Children: Premature loss of baby teeth and loss of permanent teeth due to injury are the two conditions which are observed. Dental caries are a major cause of tooth loss in children.

Adults: Gum diseases (gingivitis or periodontitis) and dental caries are the leading causes of tooth loss among adults. Smoking, diabetes and heart disease are associated with tooth loss.

Elderly: Plaque accumulation and hardening, gum recession, older fillings and dry mouth keep the elder people at high risk for losing their natural teeth.

Other causes include chewing tobacco or drug use can damage teeth and can lead to tooth loss, babies and young children are most susceptible to losing teeth prematurely due to trauma as their tooth roots and gums are still at the developing stage. Systemic conditions such as heart disease, respiratory disease, diabetes, HIV infection, malnutrition and immunosuppression are all associated with forms of periodontitis that often results in tooth loss.

Treatment

Tooth loss can be treated by using dental implants, dental bridges, dentures, etc. Dental implants are the artificial tooth roots surgically attached to the jaw to secure a replaced tooth.

These are permanent and stable and also functions like natural teeth. These can also be used with a denture for better stabilization. Some implants take 2-6 months of time to osseointegrate.

Dentures are the removable replacements for missing teeth and adjoining tissues. Partial dentures fill in the spaces created by missing teeth. Immediate dentures are inserted after the removal of natural teeth. Conventional dentures are placed in the mouth for about 3-6 months after tooth removal.

A dental bridge is a false tooth which is fused in between 2 porcelain crowns to bridge the space left behind due to tooth loss. The two crowns holds the dental bridge in place and are cemented to teeth on each side of the space. Some bridges may contain two or more false teeth between the crown components.

Complications

Mastication: People with partial edentulism, it may become extremely difficult to chew food and swallow it.

Edentulism causes the lack of confidence in people. These people are also at a high risk of cardiovascular diseases. Edentulism leads to alteration in facial structure like sunken cheeks, unsupported lips, collapsed jawline etc. Tooth loss accelerates facial ageing.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, though edentulism can be effectively managed, it is advisable to carry out necessary preventive measures to avoid its development. The edentulous state represents a compromise in the integrity of masticatory system, which is frequently accompanied by adverse functional and behavioural consequences. Smoking, dental caries and dental plaque are some of the leading causes of tooth loss. Tooth loss can be treated by using dental implants, dental bridges, dentures, etc. Some of the dental implants take months of time to osseointegrate. Edentulism is inevitable in certain individuals as it is associated with ageing.

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