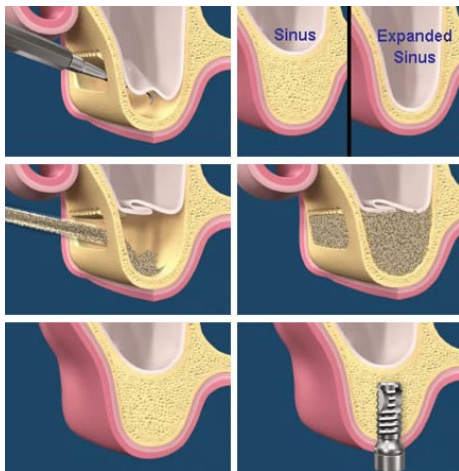


What are sinus lifts?

Sinus lift surgery is a bone graft procedure. It is performed in order to prepare a site for a dental implant in the upper jaw. Sometimes, when a patient has elected to have a dental implant, it may be necessary to have a sinus graft performed prior to insertion of the implant.

There may be a number of reasons why patients will have to undergo a sinus lift procedure. It could be that there are anatomical structures, such as the patient having a small jaw, or a large sinus, or a combination of the two resulting in little room for implant insertion. Or, it could be that the patient has suffered extensive bone loss to the degree that a bone graft is necessary to build up the jawbone, so that the dental implant will be fixed securely.

Description of Sinus Lift Surgery



Although exact practices employed by dentists may vary slightly on a patient to patient basis, the basic principles of sinus lift surgery are the same.

As with other implant surgery, bone graft surgery can be performed under a local anesthetic. If a patient is undergoing extensive bone graft surgery and insertion of implants, it may be preferable to have a general anesthetic, as it can be an uncomfortable few hours with just a local anesthetic.

After anesthesia the dentist will make an incision into the gum where the implant is planned, to expose the jawbone. The jawbone is then cut to make a movable flap which is pressed gently upwards into the sinus cavity, taking with it the sinus membrane. The sinus lift is, thus, completed and the empty space underneath where the bone was removed is then filled

with bone graft material. This bone graft material may be harvested from the patient, or it can be synthetic.

When the sinus graft has been successfully completed the dentist may insert the dental implants immediately, but more often, the dentist will allow a healing period of at least 6 months before undertaking implant surgery.

Advantages of Sinus Lift Surgery

For patients with anatomical structures that do not provide enough space for dental implants, sinus lift surgery will certainly be advantageous. Also, patients with bone loss, either as a result of gum disease or as a result of certain cancer treatments, will also benefit from a bone graft procedure and dental implants. Obviously, if a patient is wanting to have dental implants, a firm, supportive base is necessary to support the implants, and the only way of achieving this satisfactorily for some patients is a sinus lift.

Disadvantages of Sinus Lift Surgery

One of the biggest problems in sinus lift procedures is the time factor. Post-surgery it may take at least 6 months, and sometimes longer, before implant surgery can take place. The repeated surgical processes involved - at least three - is time-consuming and also adds greatly to the cost. Any surgical procedure involves risk, including damage to the sinus membrane, infection to the bone graft and non-integration of the bone graft with the natural bone. Sinus lift surgery may seem like a large undertaking. However, the benefits to patients who have undergone this surgery and had successful dental implants are more than pleased with the results.