

Better Bite

Dental implants restore bite function and support natural-looking tooth restorations.

Don Scheich has had a lot of dental work over the years.

“It started when I went into the Navy,” shares Don. “I had a strong jawbone but very soft teeth, so I gave the Navy dentist a lot of practice in his field. I’ve had a number of bridges and crowns, and over the years I guess I lost about half my teeth. I finally decided it made more sense to have the rest of them pulled and not have to worry about soft teeth anymore.”

Before acting on his decision Don talked about his dental woes with one of his brothers, who told Don that a dental implant had worked well for him in replacing one tooth. He urged Don to consider implants for his own restorative work.

“I decided to do some research,” says Don, “and I found that the practice where I’d had an extraction years before, Coastal Jaw Surgery, had an excellent reputation for placing dental implants. In fact, they have an in-depth implant program.”

Don discovered also that one of the oral surgeons there, Michael Pikos, DDS, has an excellent reputation for teaching implant dentistry.

“When I met Dr. Pikos, I had questions about the need for bone augmentation in my jawbone and the length of time it would take my gums to heal after the implants were placed. Dr. Pikos was very straightforward with me,” recalls Don. “He gave me good, understandable answers to all my questions, and I decided to proceed.”

Excellent outcome

Don’s treatment plan included the extraction of his remaining teeth and replacement of his partial lower denture with an implant-supported full lower denture. Don’s upper arch was fitted with a traditional denture.

“Before Dr. Pikos treated me, I was able to eat most of the foods I wanted to,” comments Don, “but this implant makes it a lot easier. I can chew apples and corn on the cob more comfortably now, and my implant-supported denture feels much stronger than my own teeth did.”



STRONG AND HEALTHY. Don says his bite is much better, now that his lower jaw has a full denture supported by sturdy dental implants.

FHCN PHOTO BY NERISSA JOHNSON



Michael A. Pikos, DDS
 • Diplomate, American Board of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery
 • Diplomate, American Board of Oral Implantology/Implant Dentistry
 • Diplomate, International Congress of Oral Implantologists
 • Graduate of Ohio State University, summa cum laude and Phi Beta Kappa
 • Completed dental degree with honors from Ohio State College of Dentistry

- Founder, MAP Implant Institute, where he has taught advanced bone grafting and soft tissue courses since 1990
- Adjunct assistant professor of surgery, Department of Oral & Maxillofacial Surgery at University of Miami School of Medicine; Ohio State University College of Dentistry; and Nova Southeastern University College of Dental Medicine
- Private practice limited exclusively to implant surgery, having placed more than 10,000 implants
- Well-published author who lectures extensively on dental implants and advanced bone grafting both nationally and internationally
- Has practiced oral and maxillofacial surgery in the area since 1983



Mark W. Mitchell, DDS
 • Diplomate, American of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery
 • Diplomate, International Congress of Oral Implantologists
 • Fellow, American Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons
 • Graduate of West Virginia University Dental School, summa cum laude
 • Received J. Ben Robinson Gold Medal Award for highest academic average

- Elected to Omicron Kappa Upsilon Dental Honor Society
- Extensive experience in implant dentistry, surgical restoration of the oral cavity, treatment and management of temporomandibular joint disorders, and facial and oral laser surgery



G. Thomas Peak, DDS
 • Diplomate, American Board of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery
 • Fellow, American Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons
 • Fellow, American Society for Laser Medicine and Surgery
 • Member, International College of Oral Implantologists
 • Graduate of Concord College, Athens, WV
 • Received dental degree from West

- Virginia University School of Dentistry
- Internship, Philadelphia Naval Hospital
- Dental residency, National Naval Dental Center, Bethesda, MD
- Residency in oral and maxillofacial surgery, Naval Hospital, Portsmouth, VA
- Extensive experience in implant dentistry, dento-facial pathology, maxillofacial reconstruction, orthognathic surgery, and temporomandibular joint (TMJ) disorders



James J. Gift, DDS, MS
 • Diplomate, American Board of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery
 • Graduate, Boston University
 • Graduate, Georgetown University School of Dentistry, summa cum laude
 • Elected to Omicron Kappa Upsilon Dental Honor Society
 • Air Force-sponsored oral and maxillofacial surgery residency, Ohio State University

- Master’s degree, Ohio State University
- Extensive experience in orthognathic surgery to correct dento-facial and skeletal malocclusion and deformity, severe obstructive sleep apnea, implant dentistry, facial cosmetics, and laser surgery

The doctors at Coastal Jaw Surgery are affiliated with five area hospitals and are members and officers of numerous professional organizations, including the Florida Society of Oral & Maxillofacial Surgeons; American and Florida Dental Societies of Anesthesiology; American, Florida, West Coast, West Pasco, Upper Pinellas and Hernando County Dental Associations; Academy of Osseointegration; and American Academy of Implant Dentistry. Additionally, the doctors sponsor dental implant study clubs for the area’s general dentists.



“In fact,” he confides, “I feel like I could crack nuts with these teeth if I wanted to. Between my brother’s good advice and Dr. Pikos’s skill, I’m very pleased with my results.” **FHCN**—Billie S. Noakes

Improve your bite!

Coastal Jaw Surgery, the Center for Dental Implants/Facial & Oral Reconstruction, welcomes calls regarding this article and other oral surgical topics. For a free brochure about dental implants or to schedule a consultation visit, please call any of their three locations: **4372 Commercial Way in Spring Hill, phone (352) 596-6804 or (800) 444-6804; 2711 Tampa Rd. in Palm Harbor, phone (727) 786-1631 or (800) 444-1631; and 6731 Madison St. in New Port Richey, phone (727) 842-5180 or (800) 444-5180.**

“Research continually offers advances in dentistry that really make big differences in people’s lives, and dental implants are regarded as the gold standard for replacing missing teeth,” assures Dr. Pikos. “This is true whether a patient needs to replace one tooth or several teeth or requires a full upper or lower denture.”

Dr. Pikos explains that when natural teeth are not present, the jawbone fails to deliver the nutrients necessary to support bone and gum health. Over time, gum tissue and bone mass diminish, and additional teeth become so unstable in the jawbone that they, too, may need to be removed.

Why implants work

Replacing missing teeth with a traditional bridge is not an optimal solution. A traditional bridge has to be supported by the two teeth abutting each missing tooth, Dr. Pikos points out. Preparing the abutting teeth requires a reduction of healthy tooth structure, and a traditional bridge does nothing to prevent further bone loss, putting the adjacent teeth at risk, too.

Implants are artificial tooth roots fabricated from a biocompatible material that fools the

jawbone into thinking it is supporting real teeth. Consequently, the bone continues to carry nutrients around the implants and to surrounding tissue, maintaining jawbone strength and gum stability, reducing bone loss, and providing a more stable base for tooth restorations.

Because implants bond with a patient’s jawbone structure, they provide almost as much chewing strength as healthy, natural teeth, and that has a beneficial effect on overall health, too.

Dr. Pikos explains that normal, healthy teeth exert 500 to 950 pounds of pressure per square inch, effectively pulverizing foods to help the digestive process. When a patient has to rely on traditional dentures, chewing efficiency is significantly impaired: Dentures provide only 45 pounds of pressure per square inch.

“It won’t take long for patients to adopt a softer, less nutritious diet when they begin wearing dentures,” observes Dr. Pikos, “and their health suffers for it.”

Dental implants, by contrast, replace lost teeth and restore bite function to near-normal levels, allowing patients to enjoy a diverse and more nutritious diet, which translates into better overall health.