

Newsday

Something to smile about

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Betty Townsend thought her new dentures would make eating solid foods a pleasure again. But within weeks, the uncomfortable upper arch was sitting in her dresser drawer.

For seven years, the Huntington resident gummed her food with the help of a bottom denture gingerly held in place by two loose teeth, which had to be removed last month.

But yesterday, Townsend was flashing a full smile with a mouth of new teeth for the first time in years after undergoing an implant of ceramic crowns at the Long Island Centers for Periodontics and Implant Dentistry, based in Melville.

"Before, I had to gum or swallow my food, which certainly didn't help my digestive system, so I am very happy I had the procedure," said Townsend, 79, whose speech was a bit slurred immediately following the surgery.

In the steps promoted as Teeth-in-an-Hour, the prosthetic teeth are created along with a template identical to the patient's jaw using a CAT scan that provides the periodontist with a precise guide for where to drill and place the implants. The patient returns later for a single surgery in which the prosthetic teeth are put in place.

The procedure, developed by Sweden-based Nobel Biocare, was approved by the Food and Drug Administration in 2004. Townsend is one of the first people undergoing the relatively new procedure in this country to have both the top and bottom teeth replaced, according to Leonard Marotta of the Marotta Dental Studio in



NEWSDAY PHOTOS / KAREN WILES STABLE

Above, custom-designed dental implants; above right, Betty Townsend gets her new teeth; right, she enjoys her new look with Dr. Jeffrey Kopman, who performed the procedure.

Farmingdale, which made the ceramic replacements.

"With the guide and drilling template, we are able to make an exact fit," said periodontist Dr. Jeffrey Kopman, who led the team that restored Townsend's full smile. "The Teeth-in-an-Hour procedure is minimally invasive and minimizes pain and swelling with a shorter recovery time."

With traditional implant surgery, the gums are opened to expose bone where tiny metal implants are placed to hold the teeth, said periodontist Dr. Harold Kopman, Jeffrey's father, who assisted at yesterday's surgery. With the traditional procedure, it can take up to eight months for the bone to heal.

Dr. Mary R. Truhlar, who heads the general dentistry department at Stony Brook University Medical School, said im-



plant dentistry has been around for decades and use of computer imaging and advances like Teeth-in-an-Hour are on the rise.

"Patients need to remember that although the procedure of implant placement and tooth restoration may take one session, extensive planning is necessary," said Truhlar, whose department uses similar computer imaging.

But, as with all dental sur-

gery, there is a small risk of infection, Jeffrey Kopman said.

And, the procedure can be costly, starting at \$25,000, Kopman explained. Townsend's procedure is estimated at about double that amount.

For Townsend it was worth the cost. "It was pain-free," she said. "I haven't worn lipstick in years because I didn't have teeth. I am going to a nice steakhouse."