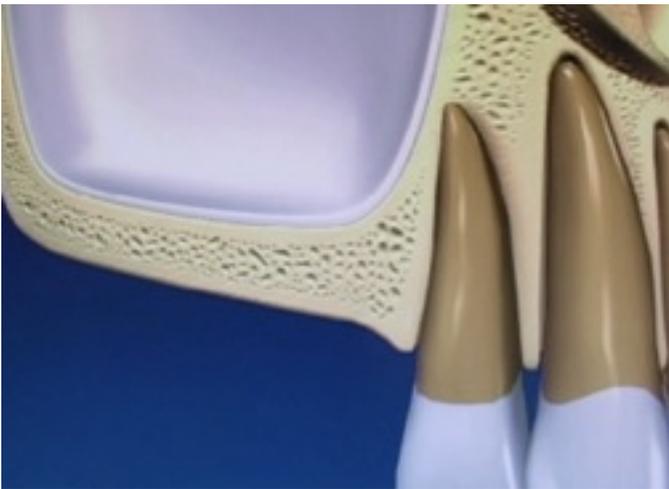


Why Sinus Lift Bone Grafting is Not All That Big Of a Surgery

By Dr. Hamid Ryan Kazemi

Some dentists discourage their patients from having [sinus lift bone grafting](#) to get [dental implants](#) because they portray it as a ‘big surgery’ and instead offer a [conventional dental bridge which has its many problems](#). And some patients simply avoid getting implants because of their anxiety or fear about bone grafting. Lets face it- the name itself, ‘sinus lift’ does not exactly sound gentle! Having performed sinus lift bone grafting now for almost twenty years, I thought it would be helpful to review some facts about this procedure and what it really is.



Sinus lift bone grafting is indicated in patients who are missing their upper back teeth and have inadequate height of bone for implant placement. This inadequacy is often due to the position of the maxillary sinus which lies right above the second premolars, first molars, and the second molars. With this technique, we can elevate the sinus level and predictably regenerate the necessary bone for a successful and long term replacement of teeth with dental implants.

To give some perspective, I often use the [extraction of an impacted wisdom tooth](#) as comparison to sinus lift bone grafting. Almost everyone has their wisdom teeth removed and there is hardly any hesitation about it. In fact, dentists recommend it in almost every individual. So lets compare a sinus lift graft procedure to extraction of an impacted wisdom tooth:



	Sinus Lift Graft	Wisdom Tooth Extraction
Gum incision	Yes	Yes
Gum flap for access	Yes	Yes
Some bone removal	Yes	Yes
Swelling	++	++++
Amount of pain	++	+++++
Number of sutures	One to two	One to two
Nerve damage	No	Possible (Less than 1%)
Infection	Rarely (less than 1%)	Rarely (less than 1%)
Patient recovery before getting back to work or school	1-2 days	1-2 days
Gum tissue healing where completely comfortable	7-10 days	7-10 days
Difficulty of procedure	++	++++





When we compare the two procedures, we see that patients have practically the same experience. In fact, there is **more swelling and pain associated with extraction of a wisdom than a sinus lift procedure**. In many ways, the sinus lift procedure is gentler and less 'traumatic' than a tooth extraction.

Sinus lift bone grafting, while a sophisticated and highly skill-intensive procedure, is nothing more than a pocket where some graft material is packed. It is a delicate procedure and when done properly, it is a highly predictable and successful procedure.

Many people have the wrong perception when it comes to the seriousness of sinus lift bone grafting, which in reality is a gentle and minimally invasive procedure. I think it is important to offer this procedure to patients who want to replace their teeth more naturally with implants and avoid the many pitfalls of a conventional bridge. Don't get intimidated by the name nor the description by a dentist who may not be well informed. It is a minor procedure and in my view, a much safer and less traumatic surgery than getting a wisdom tooth out.

And that's a fact.

Dr. H. Ryan Kazemi is a board certified oral and maxillofacial surgeon in Bethesda, MD