



COMPREHENSIVE PATIENT ASSESSMENT AND IDENTIFICATION OF RISK FACTORS BEFORE DENTAL IMPLANTATION

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ARTICLE INFO:

Received:28.09.2026

Revised: 29.09.2026

Accepted:30.09.2026

KEY WORDS:

*dental implantation,
patient assessment, risk
factors, implant failure,
treatment planning,
peri-implantitis, bone
quality, smoking,
diabetes mellitus, oral
hygiene.*

ABSTRACT

Dental implantation is considered one of the most predictable approaches for restoring missing teeth; however, successful treatment depends not only on surgical technique and implant design but also on comprehensive preoperative patient assessment. The identification of systemic, local, behavioral, anatomical, and biomechanical risk factors before implant placement is essential for reducing complications and improving long-term treatment outcomes. This article analyzes the major components of pre-implant assessment, including medical and dental history, periodontal status, bone quantity and quality, radiographic evaluation, oral hygiene, smoking, diabetes mellitus, parafunctional habits, and patient-related factors.

Introduction

Dental implants have become an important component of contemporary oral rehabilitation because they provide functional and esthetic replacement of missing teeth. Nevertheless, implant therapy should not begin with implant placement itself. A successful clinical protocol starts with a detailed evaluation of the patient. The clinician should determine whether the patient is an appropriate candidate for implant therapy and identify factors that may negatively affect osseointegration, wound healing, peri-implant tissue stability, or long-term prosthetic function.

Misch emphasizes the importance of diagnosis and treatment planning in implant dentistry, including diagnostic imaging, patient-related force factors, bone density, available bone, implant position, and prosthetic considerations [1]. The organization of Contemporary Implant Dentistry reflects this principle by placing diagnosis and treatment planning before surgical procedures.



Modern evidence-based approaches similarly emphasize sound diagnostics and systematic assessment as prerequisites for predictable implant treatment. Preoperative evaluation should therefore include both general medical and dental assessment. The clinician should obtain information concerning cardiovascular disease, diabetes mellitus, medications, previous surgical procedures, allergies, smoking, alcohol consumption, periodontal disease, oral hygiene, bruxism, and previous implant treatment. These factors should not automatically be interpreted as absolute contraindications; rather, their severity, control, interaction, and potential modification should be considered individually. The ITI approach to implant treatment also emphasizes individual risk assessment and structured treatment planning. For example, its treatment guides incorporate risk analysis, case complexity assessment, and patient-specific planning before definitive implant therapy [2].

Analysis and Discussion

A detailed medical history represents the first stage of pre-implant evaluation. Implant surgery involves tissue injury followed by healing and osseointegration. Consequently, systemic conditions that affect immune response, vascular function, bone metabolism, or tissue repair may influence treatment outcomes. Diabetes mellitus is an important example. The clinical relevance of diabetes depends substantially on metabolic control. Evidence indicates that poorly controlled diabetes can be associated with impaired osseointegration, increased peri-implantitis risk, and greater implant failure, whereas well-controlled diabetes may permit comparatively predictable implant treatment [3].

Clinical example: A 58-year-old patient with a missing mandibular first molar requests an implant. During medical history taking, the dentist discovers that the patient has diabetes mellitus and reports irregular glucose monitoring. Instead of proceeding directly to surgery, the clinician should assess the patient's diabetic control and, when appropriate, coordinate care with the treating physician. Implant treatment can then be planned according to the patient's systemic condition. Thus, the important clinical question is not simply “Does the patient have diabetes?” but rather “How well is the disease controlled, and how might it affect healing and long-term maintenance?”

Smoking should be carefully documented during preoperative assessment. Tobacco exposure can adversely affect periodontal and peri-implant tissues through multiple biological mechanisms, including changes in vascularization, tissue homeostasis, oral microbiota, and fibroblast function [4]. Recent systematic-review evidence also associates smoking with an increased risk of early implant failure. For example, a 45-year-old patient who smokes heavily and requires multiple implants should not be evaluated in the same manner as a non-smoking patient with otherwise similar anatomical conditions. Smoking history—including frequency and duration—should be documented, and smoking cessation should form part of risk-reduction counseling. This illustrates an essential principle of modern implant dentistry: risk assessment is



not merely a process of identifying contraindications. It should also identify modifiable factors that can potentially be improved before surgery.

The condition of the remaining teeth and periodontal tissues should be examined carefully. Active periodontal inflammation, inadequate plaque control, bleeding on probing, periodontal pockets, and a previous history of periodontitis require particular attention. A systematic review and meta-analysis found a significantly greater risk of peri-implantitis among patients with a history of periodontitis compared with periodontally healthy individuals [5]. More recent evidence has likewise identified periodontitis and smoking as important risk indicators for peri-implant diseases.

Clinical example: Consider a patient who has adequate bone volume for implant placement but demonstrates generalized gingival inflammation, periodontal pockets, and poor plaque control. Radiographically, the implant site may appear suitable. However, proceeding immediately with implant surgery would ignore a major biological risk. Periodontal treatment, oral-hygiene instruction, disease stabilization, and reassessment should precede definitive implant therapy.

This example demonstrates why radiographic suitability alone is insufficient for determining implant candidacy.

Local anatomical assessment is another fundamental component of implant planning. The clinician should evaluate ridge dimensions, bone morphology, bone density, anatomical limitations, and the relationship between the planned restoration and implant position. Misch identifies implant-site bone density and available bone as major determinants of treatment planning [1]. His treatment-planning framework also emphasizes biomechanical factors, implant number, implant position, and prosthetic requirements.

For example, a patient may have sufficient vertical bone height but inadequate buccolingual ridge width. In such a case, simply selecting a narrower implant without considering the restorative and biological requirements may compromise the final result. Depending on the individual situation, augmentation or another treatment strategy may need to be considered. Three-dimensional radiographic assessment, particularly when clinically indicated, can provide valuable information about bone morphology and important anatomical structures. Imaging findings should always be interpreted together with clinical examination and the prosthetically planned implant position.

In the anterior maxilla, implant success cannot be evaluated solely in terms of implant survival. The appearance and stability of peri-implant soft tissues are particularly important. The ITI Treatment Guide for single-tooth replacement in the esthetic zone emphasizes assessment of the patient's individual esthetic risk profile followed by three-dimensional implant planning and prosthetic management [6]. For instance, a patient with a high smile line, thin soft-tissue phenotype, and high esthetic expectations may present a more demanding situation than a patient with a low smile line and thick tissue phenotype. Both patients may be medically



healthy, but their clinical risk profiles differ. Therefore, the clinician should assess not only whether an implant can be placed, but also whether a predictable functional and esthetic result can be achieved.

Occlusal forces must also be considered. Bruxism, clenching, unfavorable occlusal relationships, limited prosthetic space, and excessive functional loading can increase biomechanical demands on the implant-supported restoration. The treatment plan should therefore integrate surgical and prosthetic considerations from the beginning. Misch's Dental Implant Prosthetics discusses patient-related force factors, bone density, implant position, available bone, prosthetic design, and implant-protective occlusion as interconnected components of implant treatment planning [2]. A patient with severe bruxism, for example, may require a different prosthetic and maintenance strategy from a patient with normal functional loading. The clinician should recognize such factors before treatment rather than only after mechanical complications develop.

Comprehensive assessment demonstrates that implant risk is usually multifactorial. A single factor may not determine the outcome independently. Instead, several conditions can interact. For example, consider a 60-year-old patient presenting with the following conditions: controlled type 2 diabetes, a history of periodontitis, smoking, reduced posterior bone volume, and inadequate oral hygiene. Evaluating only bone volume would provide an incomplete picture of this patient's risk profile. A more appropriate sequence would include medical assessment, periodontal examination, evaluation and improvement of oral hygiene, smoking counseling, radiographic and anatomical assessment, prosthetic planning, and only then determination of the appropriate surgical approach.

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