Woman Gets Jawbone Made by 3D Printer

Need a new jawbone? Now you can print one.

An 83-year-old British woman recently underwent the first-ever custom transplant of a lower jaw made by a 3D printer.

According to 3Ders.org, the Biomedical Research Institute at Hasselt University in Belgium announced last week that it implanted a printed jawbone in June, which was created by metal part maker LayerWise.

The patient — who can now chew and speak with ease — suffered from a chronic bone infection. Doctors were worried that at her age, reconstructive surgery could have caused complications.

The 3D-printed jawbone, which is made of titanium powder, was heated and infused together in layers. Once the design was created, it took only a few hours to print. The new jaw weighs slightly more than the previous one.

The woman is currently gearing up to receive a set of dentures that will be attached to the implant in a follow-up procedure.

Doctors involved with the surgery believe that more 3D parts can be created specifically for patients in the near future.

“Computer technology is causing a revolution in the medical industry,” professor Jules Poukens of the University of Hasselt said in a statement. “A traditional surgery takes up to 20 hours, and the patient should definitely stay two to four weeks in the hospital. But this operation lasted four hours and the woman could go home after four days.”

3D printing is becoming more popular thanks to new research and companies dedicating effort to the movement. In fact, a company called Made in Space is working to help astronauts print out parts such as wrenches and nails for spacecraft and space stations while in orbit.

In addition, file-sharing company The Pirate Bay last week introduced a new content category called “Physibles,” which is designed to allow people to pass physical objects to one another via the Internet. The term refers to data files that are actually able to become physical objects via 3D printing technology.

Do you think 3D printing of body parts will become increasingly popular in the future? What do you think about the concept? Let us know your thoughts in the

comments.

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Posted by Janine E. Mooney, Editor

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