

## Missing a tooth?

Implants can offer a secure permanent solution for replacing one or more teeth. Dental implants are an established and time tested procedure and have now become a standard of care for replacing missing teeth. In some cases a broken or missing tooth can be extracted and an implant with a crown attached can be placed the same day.

A dental implant is a titanium rod or screw which is placed in the jawbone and serves as an anchor or root for the missing tooth. When replacing a single tooth the advantage gained by placing an implant is that there is no longer a need to cut away normal tooth structure of the teeth next to the implant site for a bridge. They are natural looking and feel and function like real teeth. They are resistant to decay because they are made of metal and porcelain although proper brushing and flossing is still required to maintain healthy tissues around the implant. The implant act like real tooth roots maintaining your bone structure which in turns supports your facial tissues. Although implants have a higher upfront cost their longevity and high patient satisfaction reduce costs in the long term.

Implants can be used to replace a single tooth, multiple teeth or even a whole set of teeth. For a single missing tooth only one implant is needed. If a few teeth are missing two or three implants are usually enough. When all teeth are missing four to six implants are usually needed. The exact number needed will be determined by your dentist. Your dentist will also evaluate the amount of bone that exist at the site that the implant is needed. If there is not enough bone, or if it is not shaped correctly or not healthy enough, it may not be possible to place implants without grafting bone into the area first. When bone is grafted into the implant site we usually wait 3-4 months before placing the implant into that site. Once implants have been placed there are instances when it can be restored immediately and sometimes longer healing periods are needed from 2 – 4 months. It is best not to rush the healing period because healthy implants will last for years.

The main reasons implants fail are smoking and people with systemic conditions which affect healing. People who smoke should realize that they have the highest rate of implant failures. When discussing implants with your dentist they will review your medical history and risk factors and discuss these issues as they pertain to you.

When you first inquire about dental implants it is often in response to an awareness of ongoing dental problems or the recent loss of teeth. Each of these problems will need to be diagnosed and treated in a logical manner. Although it is tempting to focus on the more glamorous aspects of teeth supported by implants, basic dental health, which includes the treatment of gum disease, repair of caries and elimination of abscesses will be just as important for the long term success of your treatment.

The success of implant therapy depends on many factors. Oral hygiene plays a very major role in implant success. The manner in which the implant is used can affect the lifespan, for example, is it supporting many teeth or one tooth. If well maintained, an implant may last for more than twenty years. Success rates can be as high as 99%. Patients who have had an implant placed most always choose another implant when given the choice.

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