

All About Dental Implants

A dental implant is an artificial tooth root that is placed into your jaw to hold a replacement tooth or bridge. Dental implants are an ideal option for people in good general oral health who have lost a tooth or teeth due to periodontal disease, an injury, or some other reason. If you still have questions after reading this information, have a conversation with your periodontist.

What procedures may have to be completed before placing my implant?

A procedure called **"socket preservation"** is sometimes needed to preserve bone and minimize bone loss adjacent to a tooth that has been removed. One common technique is to fill the socket with bone or bone substitute and allow the bone to heal for approximately four to twelve months before implant placement.

"Ridge modification" may be needed if you don't have enough bone to support an implant. This bone loss could be caused by periodontal disease, wearing dentures, injury, or trauma. During this procedure, bone or bone substitute is added where needed to ensure a proper foundation for implants. Your bone usually needs four to twelve months of healing time before placing implants.

"Sinus augmentation" may be needed to place implants in the upper back jaw, where your bone is very close to your sinus. In this procedure, the sinus floor is raised so there is more room for new bone to grow to provide a proper foundation for implants. After four to twelve months of healing time, you will be ready to have your implants placed. All of these procedures have been shown to greatly increase your chances for successful

implants that can last for years to come.

What are the advantages of an implant over a bridge or denture?

A dental implant provides several advantages over other tooth replacement options, including:

- **Maintain the integrity of your remaining teeth.** In addition to looking and functioning like a natural tooth, a dental implant replaces a single tooth without sacrificing the health of neighboring teeth. The other common treatment for the loss of a single tooth, a tooth-supported fixed bridge, requires that the adjacent teeth be ground down to support the cemented bridge. When replacing multiple teeth, bridges and partial dentures rely on support from adjacent teeth, while implant-supported bridges do not.
- **Maintain bone health.** Because a dental implant will replace your tooth root, your jawbone is better preserved. Implants integrate with your jawbone, helping to keep your bone healthy and intact. With a bridge or denture, some of the bone that previously surrounded the tooth starts to deteriorate.
- **Long-term benefits.** In the long term, implants are esthetic, functional, and comfortable. On the other hand, gums and bone can recede around a bridge or denture which leaves a visible defect, deteriorated bone from bridges and dentures can lead to a collapsed and unattractive smile, and cement holding bridges in place can wash out, allowing bacteria to decay the teeth that are anchoring the bridge. Finally, removable dentures can move around in your mouth, reducing your ability to eat certain foods.



How is the implant placed in my mouth?

First, the implant, which looks like a screw, is placed into your jaw. Over the next few months, the implant and bone are then allowed to bond together to form an anchor for your artificial teeth. During this time, a temporary tooth replacement option can be worn. Sometimes a second procedure is needed to place an extension on the implant. This small metal post, called an abutment, completes the foundation on which your new tooth will be placed. The replacement tooth (or bridge or denture) will then be created by your periodontist or other dental professional and attached to the abutment.

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