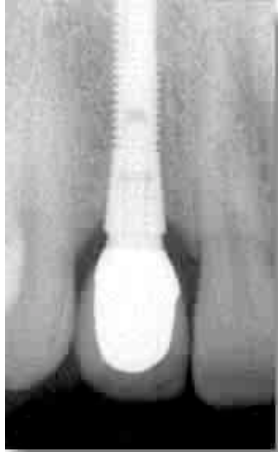


What are Implants

Whether you are missing just one tooth or all of your teeth, implants can be used as a solution to restore your mouth to full function. Implants are metal “screws” placed into the bone of the jaw in the place of a tooth’s root. These can then be restored with a single crown, a denture or a bridge depending on the situation.

Implants are made out of titanium which has the unique property that it will anchor into, and integrate with the bone. The result can be a more natural look and you will have more confidence in the stability of the restoration.



Why do I need to replace teeth

Once a tooth is lost, in a short period of time bone will be lost from the area. Dental implants are effective in minimising this loss by supporting the bone and will give a natural look.

Implants are individual, therefore there is no need to involve the adjacent teeth. If a bridge was chosen instead the adjacent teeth would have to be filed down, obviously affecting their long term health. Equally dentures do not give wearers much confidence. This may restrict eating, affect speech and cause soreness. Implants can be used to anchor the denture in mouth. An implant replacement for a single tooth will appear and function in exactly the same way as the original tooth. Implants can be used to replace every tooth

if all are missing or for a more cost effective solution to support a denture.

Implants can provide a dental replacement that is both functional and aesthetic. In effect a second chance for the lost tooth.

Who can have implants?

Anyone with reasonable health and enough bone in the area where the implant needs to be placed can have an implant. If enough bone is not available it may still be possible to have implants placed using other techniques such as bone grafting where bone can be moved into the area to allow the implant to be placed.

Smoking is a problem with implants. The success rate has been scientifically proven to be lower in patients who smoke. The options are to accept the lower success rate or quit smoking, at least for the weeks before and after implant placement.

Bone Grafting / Substitutes

If insufficient bone is available to place the implant a number of other techniques are available.

Bone can be added into the site by moving it from another part of the mouth or other part of the body.

Artificial bone can also be used. There are different types including substitutes derived from materials such as coral and also treated bone from animal sources. Your dentist will discuss all of the options with you. These can sometimes be used alone or in combination with some of your own bone.

When grafting is involved, additional surgery is needed; this will mean that some extra time is usually needed before fully restoring the implants.

Options

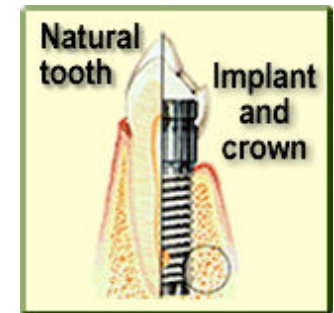
Loss of a single tooth:

Denture – Bulky, uncomfortable, un natural look and feel. Bone will continue to shrink.

Bridge – Good appearance, however uses other teeth to anchor. These will usually need to be filed down. Bone will continue to shrink. Long term cost may be high as the bridge will need replacing.

Leave gap – Other teeth will move, looks unsightly. Bone will continue to shrink.

Implant – Individual, no affect on other teeth. Bone will be stabilised and not shrink as much. Will feel like the tooth that should be there. Cost is high initially but long term cost is low.



All teeth missing:

Full dentures – Loose, sore, can't eat all foods.

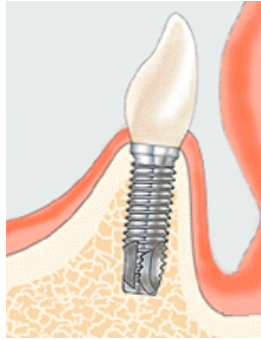
Implant retained dentures – Functional, natural look, allow most foods to be eaten without a problem, very stable. Need to be removed for cleaning. Cost effective. Can be preferable to a fixed bridge since the lost bone is more readily replaced.

Full mouth implant reconstruction – Individual teeth restored on a fixed bridge. No need to remove except for maintenance. Very stable, allows all foods to be eaten. Expensive.

What is involved?

In most cases the implant can be placed under local anaesthetic.

Sometimes sedation can be used to make the experience more comfortable. The procedure is not at all painful, similar to a dental extraction.



When the anaesthetic wears off there can be a little discomfort and swelling for a few days.

How long do I have to wait?

In most cases the implants are left to integrate into the bone before placing the final crown, bridge or denture. In this period if the space is not visible it will be best to leave a gap, if visible it may be possible to make a temporary adhesive bridge that can be removed later with no harm to the other teeth or a temporary denture.

In the upper jaw it is best to wait longer, maybe up to six months before restoring the implant. In the lower jaw it is not usually necessary to wait as long, possibly only three months. It is now possible, usually for single teeth, to “immediately load” the implant i.e. place a crown on the implant at the time of placement. However this may not always be suitable and it may be better to wait.

Final restoration

The final restoration can be a crown or bridge made in a similar way as it would be on a natural tooth. Over time this may need replacement for wear and tear or colour change, however the implant itself may last for many years, possibly for

life if properly integrated. The crown can simply be changed.

If a denture is the final restoration, this can be attached to the implants by clips on a bar, magnets or ball clasps. These will provide a very rigid denture and increase the quality of life with dentures considerably.

What is the success like?

It depends upon the patient in which the implant is placed and where in the mouth, but success can be as high as 95 to 100%.

In the lower jaw implant success is at its highest and the back of the upper jaw is usually the lowest, even here success can be as high as 85 to 95%.

Sometimes an implant does not integrate properly with the bone. If this does occur it may be possible to replace the implant with a bigger implant or replace the implant later.

It is important to look after the implant once it has been placed. Regular hygiene appointments and check ups will be essential.

Cost

The cost of having an implant or implants can appear high. However, the implant will last considerably longer than any other treatment e.g. a bridge, will not harm any other tooth, will cost less to maintain over the life of the implant and will keep the bone.

Dental Implants

