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Implant Information

If you lose or break a tooth, a dental implant may be the best option for restoring your smile. Learn more about dental implants and whether they are right for you.

What is a dental implant?

A dental implant is a post, usually made of titanium, which serves as a substitute for a natural tooth's root. The implant is placed in the jawbone so that it may fuse with the natural bone to become a sturdy foundation for a replacement tooth. Implants can be used to replace individual teeth or to support a bridge or denture containing multiple teeth.

Who can receive implants?

Dental implants can be provided to most patients who are missing teeth due to decay, disease, injury, or other medical conditions. You also may be a candidate for a dental implant if you can't wear dentures or find them uncomfortable, or if you don't want to sacrifice existing tooth structure to support a dental bridge.

Since surgery is required, implant patients must be in good general health, with healthy gums and adequate bone structure. If an implant site lacks the adequate structure, a dentist may be able to perform procedures to improve it.

Implants are not for everyone, however. Chronic conditions like bruxism, diabetes, or leukemia may interfere with healing after implant surgery, so the success rate decreases for patients with these conditions. This also is the case for patients taking bisphosphonates for osteoporosis. Additionally, those who drink alcohol or use tobacco may not be good candidates for implants. Your dentist will take into consideration your medical and dental history when deciding if implants are right for you.

How does implant placement work?

First, your dentist will perform surgery to place the implant in the jaw. Next, the surrounding bone will heal via a process called osseointegration; the bone grows around the implant to hold it firmly in place. Finally, your dentist will complete the process by placing on the post an artificial tooth, or crown, that resembles your natural teeth.

How long does implant placement take?

Once the implant placement surgery is completed—usually in an hour or two—the healing process begins, and that can take as long as six months. Additionally, the fitting of the permanent replacement tooth is usually accomplished in one to three weeks. Your dentist may provide you with a temporary replacement to help you eat and speak normally until the permanent replacement is ready. If your bone structure is strong enough, however, your dentist may be able to place the implant and replacement tooth in one visit.



What can I expect after the procedure?

Most patients will adjust to implants immediately. Some people may feel slight discomfort or notice differences in their chewing or speech, but these symptoms are usually temporary.

How do I care for my implant?

Although an implant's success rate depends on its purpose and location in the mouth—as well as the patient's overall health—a major reason some implants fail is poor hygiene. It's important to brush implants at least twice a day, as well as to floss in between them. Additionally, as many as four dental cleanings per year may be necessary to maintain gum health. Your dentist will give you specific instructions on caring for your implants.

Talk to your general dentist to find out whether dental implants are right for you.

Academy of General Dentistry™

KnowYourTeeth.com
Brought to you by the Academy of General Dentistry (AGD), this website answers important dental health questions, offers the latest information on current treatments, provides tips for first-rate oral hygiene, and helps visitors find highly qualified general dentists near where they live.

The AGD is a member of the Partnership for Healthy Mouths, Healthy Lives, a first-of-its-kind national dental coalition composed of 37 leading dental health organizations. Look for more information about the Kids' Healthy Mouths campaign at *www.2min2x.org.*

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