

IMPLANTS:

A dental implant replaces a missing or lost tooth. The implant consists of 3 parts: a titanium screw that replaces the root of the tooth, a porcelain crown that replaces the missing tooth and piece in the middle (called an abutment) that connects the screw and the crown.

If you lose a tooth or are missing a tooth resulting in a gap between your teeth, your remaining teeth, jaw, and bite will become unstable. Dental implants replace missing teeth (fill in the gap) and restore stability to your mouth/teeth.



Anatomy of a Complete implant system

WHO IS A CANDIDATE FOR DENTAL IMPLANTS?

Dental implants are an ideal treatment option for most healthy people. In most cases, dental implants are a better option than a bridge. Exceptions to this rule are patients who are long-term heavy smokers, uncontrolled diabetics, and patients who have undergone bisphosphonate treatment. To find out if you are a candidate for dental implants, schedule a consultation visit to discuss all of your options for restoring your teeth.

WHAT ARE THE ADVANTAGES TO DENTAL IMPLANTS?

There are several advantages to choosing dental implant treatment. First, the implant replaces the whole missing tooth (crown and root). Because the root of the tooth is restored, the bone supporting the implant remains healthy and strong. Left without a root or implant, the bone will resorb (atrophy) away leaving a defect in the jaw.

Another advantage of dental implants over a bridge is that the teeth next to the implant do not require any work/drilling. When we use a bridge to replace missing teeth, we have to file the teeth on either side of the space to make room for crowns to go on either side of the space. A separate crown to replace the missing tooth in the space is permanently attached to the two crowns on either side of the space, thereby making a one piece, three-unit, bridge. A bridge may eventually have to be replaced as it will typically not last as long as an implant. The average life of a 3-unit bridge is 7 to 10 years. The average life of an implant is 20 to 30 years. A great advantage of implants is that once they settle in, they rarely fail. You may need to replace your implant abutment or implant crown after a long while, but it is extremely rare to ever need to replace the entire implant system.

From the patient's perspective, an implant looks and acts just like a normal tooth. You can floss it just like a tooth, and it looks and functions like a natural tooth. *Dental implants* are one of the most successful procedures available in dentistry today.

WHAT ARE THE DISADVANTAGES TO DENTAL IMPLANTS?

One drawback to dental implant treatment is that the process takes a while. From start to finish, the process takes between 4 to 6 months. After the implant is initially placed, it has to have time to settle into the jaw (through a process called osseointegration). After the implant settles in, the implant can be completed in 2 to 3 weeks.

Another possible drawback to dental implant treatment is mastering the aesthetics of the restoration. Trying to match an implant tooth to blend in with the natural teeth can be difficult, and sometimes (for example if you need to replace two adjacent teeth in the smile), a bridge is a better option.

A final thing to consider when choosing dental implant treatment is the fact that placing the implant requires surgery. For most cases the surgery is minor, and you may or may not have to undergo sedation or general anesthesia (put to sleep) in order to have the implant placed. Still this is a consideration that you must weigh when deciding which treatment/restoration is the best one for you.

To learn more about your dental implant options, call us to schedule an appointment.