

Should I Get Dental Implants?

There is a great deal of buzz in the dental world right now about implants. Some dentists claim they can do them in one day, others say it requires a long process. What are implants? What are they for and do I need them?

Missing teeth can cause many problems in your mouth if left unattended. The remaining teeth can begin to shift and move toward the empty space, where the tooth used to be, as well as loosen, as they shift. The shifting and/or lack of a tooth can alter one's bite, and consequently affect a person's jaw and create other issues. You absolutely do not want any missing teeth.

If you suffer from missing teeth, you are a candidate for implants. Of course, you must meet other criteria. Good health is important, because surgery is involved and you need to be safe during that process.

Other Reasons for Implants

Aside from a missing tooth, another reason individuals turn to implants is because they feel unhappy with their smile. The missing tooth causes embarrassment. Some individuals have tried the bridge route and it has broken. Some individuals have had the doctor create a partial denture, also called a flipper. Again, this bothers them. Implants can fix all of these problems.

A patient can choose to have one implant or as many as they prefer. Each implant requires the doctor to surgically place a post into your jawbone. This post acts as the root of the tooth it replaces. Implants may be placed in the upper or lower jawbone of the mouth.

Presently, implants are made from lightweight metals like titanium that the body is likely to accept. Right now, the U.S. sees more than 5 million implants placed per year.

Pros of Implants

First, implants are solid posts. In the event that you need to attach a bridge or a denture to the implant, you can expect that the post will stand firm in your mouth. This gives patients more confidence in their smile.

Next, because the implant stands firm in your mouth, it feels more natural and helps you feel more comfortable. Whereas, if you always have to make adjustments to how your denture feels, the denture never feels very great in your mouth. The implant feels like it's part of your natural anatomy.

The jawbone will refrain from shrinking, because the dental implant replaces the missing tooth. This is an important part of your oral health.

Last, implants will remain for a lifetime. You are making a solid investment in your health and wellness when you choose an implant.

Types of Implants

If you only have one missing tooth, a single tooth implant may be a great fit for you. This means that the dentist and oral surgeon only need to treat the space of a single missing tooth. They do not need to do any treatment on the teeth next to the missing tooth.

When you have multiple missing teeth or require the use of a bridge or a partial denture, you still may be a great candidate for implants. Rather than create an implant for every single missing teeth, you can have the doctor place several implants that will fuse down into your bone. Then, you can either create a self-supported bridge (meaning this does not require help from other teeth), or you can have the dentist create a special denture that snaps into the implants. Each of these scenarios will look natural in your mouth, help you feel more comfortable, as well as create a beautiful smile.

The Implant Process

Some offices will offer a same day placement of an implant, but it is likely that your implants will require several months to place. Speak to your dentist. Shop around, and be certain that you have absolute confidence in your doctor to place the implants. You want the best possible care and these are permanent, so you want to be happy with your choice.

Initially, you will meet with your dentist to come up with a plan about how and who will do what in your treatment. After you have created the blue print, this will follow.

- 1) A Bone Graft—Now, this is not always required; although, it is really common. Many patients do not have a thick/strong enough jawbone to support an implant. Consequently, an oral surgeon will do a bone graft to help strengthen the implant site. This can take anywhere from a few months to about six months to heal. Once the oral surgeon clears you for that, you are ready for the placement of your implant.
- 2) Implant Placement—The dentist will surgically place the abutments into your jawbone. She will use x-rays and pictures to determine the best possible placement. You can expect swollen jaws and cheeks for a little bit after this happens. Of course, the doctor will send you with some pain medication to aid in the healing process.
- 3) Healing—This part can take some time. The implant needs the jawbone to accept it, as well as grown around the implant. This is what firms the implant. The dental world refers to this as osseointegration. For some, this

happens quickly, but for many it takes several months before the implant is definitely integrated into the jawbone.

- 4) **Your Prosthetic Tooth**—Your dentist will crown the abutment, making you a beautiful ceramic tooth that screws directly into the abutment. Or if you need a bridge, dentures, or partial dentures, the dentist will make such. The hardware underneath will absolutely support the natural-looking tooth up top. Expect this process to take a few weeks, like a normal crown would take. During the waiting period, you will wear a temporary.

The Final Qualifications

Implants are beautiful and wonderful and have truly revolutionized the dental industry. They make magic in a person's mouth and create long-lasting smiles and stability for good oral health. However, not everyone is a great candidate for such.

As previously mentioned, if you wish to have an implant, your family doctor must clear you. Additionally, you must be committed to taking care of the implant and following instructions from your dentist and oral surgeon to ensure you do not worsen your gum disease or other oral health problems. Good health includes refraining from using tobacco. This can damage your oral health quickly and amp up the damage, as an implant offers exposure to the bone. Also, your jawbone needs to be checked that it can support such a process. You may need the bone graft discussed previously. Last, if you suffer from cancer, AIDS, diabetes, or have a weakened immune system, implants may not be the best possible scenario for you. The only way to know is to consult your doctor and honestly communicate matters regarding your present health.

Keeping Up With Your Implant(s)

Once you have determined this is the right step for you, follow through with your dentist. Counsel with her in regards to the treatment plan, as well as a cost sheet of the expenses. Implants tend to cost more than other processes, but the results will far outweigh said cost.

Aside from the cost, be prepared to keep up with your routine visits. This is of the utmost importance to ensure that your body continues to accept the implant and your gums remain in good standing.

Remember to do your part at home. Brush regularly and consistently each day and preferably after meals. Floss after meals and make that your regular routine. Each of these will protect you from advancing gum disease.

Dental implants can be a great blessing in a patient's life. Call to schedule a consultation with your doctor today to see if they are right for you.