



DENTAL IMPLANTS

A Guide to Understanding Your
Treatment Options



What are Dental Implants?

Dental implants are artificial roots and teeth (usually titanium) that are surgically placed into the upper or lower jawbone.

Due to the biocompatible properties of titanium, a dental implant fuses with the bone and becomes a good anchor for the replacement tooth. Dental implants can be used for replacing single or multiple missing teeth. The teeth attached to implants are strong, stable, durable and natural looking – giving many patients the confidence to smile again.

Implant Surgery

Missing teeth can be an embarrassing and frustrating problem. But they can also affect your health and overall wellness — disrupting a natural bite, and affecting speech and eating choices. In fact, as you come to rely more on remaining teeth, the chance increases that they will wear out prematurely, or be damaged or lost. You may also experience headaches and/or jaw pain. This is primarily due to jaw deterioration and is a natural consequence of missing teeth. Fortunately, dental implants are a permanent solution.

Multiple Teeth & Implanted-Supported Implant Bridges

When multiple teeth need to be replaced, an oral surgeon may suggest multiple single-tooth implants or an implant-supported implant bridge. An implant-supported bridge is surgically embedded, creating a firm anchor for the bridge to then be mounted to. After proper time for healing following implant surgery, the posts or abutments are then attached to the implants and a custom-made bridge is then cemented onto the posts. This allows for healthy teeth close to the surgical site to be left undisturbed while strengthening and preserving the jawbone by simulating bone growth.

Bone Grafting

When a patient's jawbone is too soft or isn't thick enough, a patient may require bone grafting before dental implant surgery. The primary reason for this is that the action of chewing exerts great pressure on the jaw bone. If there is a lack of support for the implant, the surgery may fail. A bone graft can create a more solid base for the dental implant. There are several different bone-grafting materials available, including transplanted bone from another area of the patient. It may take up to six months for transplanted bone to grow enough new bone to support a dental implant. If only minor bone grafting is needed, the procedure can often be done at the same time as the extraction of the tooth.

Full Arch Replacement

With dental implants, it is possible to provide a solution for individuals who have lost all their teeth. When all teeth are missing or are in a condition where they need to be replaced, the best permanent solution can be a fixed bridge anchored to dental implants. The benefits of this procedure are obvious. A full arch replacement is a stable and permanent solution that allows patients to eat and function like they have natural teeth, giving them the confidence of a preserved facial appearance and the added benefit of preventing bone loss in the jaw.

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In a typical treatment, 8 – 10 visits are usually required to have a fixed bridge installed. The treatment plan and number of appointments needed can vary, but the following serves as a common course of treatment for a fixed bridge procedure.

Before the procedure, the oral surgeon determines how to proceed and lays out a course of treatment.

Installing the Implants

The first procedure will involve installing dental implants to replace tooth roots that have been lost. Most of the time, 5 implants are used initially. Temporary teeth are then attached to allow patients to function normally and eat as they wish while the permanent bridge is prepared and implants have time to properly heal.

Attaching the Bridge

Once adequate time has been given for the gums around the implants to heal, the final bridge is installed securely on top of the implants. This process can typically take 2 or 3 visits to complete.

The new teeth are usually completely indistinguishable from traditional teeth in both in look and feel. Patients who have had dentures before undergoing this procedure typically describe the improvement with full arch replacement as a drastically better look and feel than their dentures.

Alternatives to a fixed bridge include a removable implant-anchored overdenture or a removable full denture. Both options have small advantages, but greater disadvantages. Moreover, neither provide the real permanent solution that a permanent full arch replacement provides.



RENEE ARBIT, RDA
Implant Treatment Coordinator

My role as Implant Treatment Coordinator is enriched by the collegiate education I completed to become a Registered Dental Assistant. I received RDA from the Tennessee Technology School. Professionally, I grew from assisting our Oral Surgeons in the office to accepting a position of Implant Treatment Coordinator. In this practice, I realized that I had found my niche: helping people restore and maintain their dental health. I loved the challenge of helping to create the smile our patient's desire. This oral surgery and implant practice has been my professional home since 1989.

In 2010, I took on a new role as Implant Treatment Coordinator (ITC). While I have seen many changes since entering the dental field, restoring missing teeth with dental implants has been the most exciting. As ITC, I serve two groups: dentists who recommend and restore the implants we place, and patients who are fortunate enough to have their lives improved by them. Together with Drs. Hardison, Dr. Warden, dental laboratories, and representatives from manufacturers of different implant systems, I also provide educational programs on implants for dentists and their staffs.

I look forward to helping people with their implant treatment. My goal is to make their experience in our office pleasant, enjoyable, educational and rewarding. Also, I will serve as a liaison between Middle Tennessee Oral and Implant Surgery and the patient's dentist as well educating the patient about dental implants and the treatment process at our practice.

What is a dental implant?

A dental implant is a small titanium screw that is implanted into the upper or lower jaw to replace the root and serve as an anchor for a replacement tooth. Because titanium has biocompatible properties, titanium implants fuse with a patient's bone enabling it to offer solid and reliable support.

Why dental implants?

When a tooth's root structure decays, a more solid anchor for replacement teeth is needed. The jawbone can also shrink during the natural aging process, aesthetically changing a patient's facial structure. A dental implant is stable and offers a lifetime of solid support without ever needing adjustments.

Are dental implants successful?

In a recent study, 95% of dental implants were reported as successful over a 5 year period of observance.

How much do dental implants cost?

The total cost of dental implants will depend on the number of teeth being replaced and the number of implants needed to support them. Our team will be able to give an estimate of total cost after a consultation has been performed at our office.

Who is a Candidate?

Candidates include patients dealing with damage to teeth due to tooth decay, injury, or disease.

Is old age a problem?

Old age is not a direct factor in the effectiveness of a dental implant. However, certain medical conditions or medical history may affect the success of the surgery. Our doctors will be able to advise patients on a case-by-case basis to assess any factors that could influence surgical outcomes.

What are the advantages of dental implants over dentures or a dental bridge?

Advantages of dental implants over a dental bridge include improved appearance, preservation of other natural teeth, permanence, and overall natural look and feel.

Will my new teeth look natural?

When dental implants are used, comfort, appearance and function are, for most patients, virtually identical to natural teeth.

Will I be able to chew with the same force and pressure I use with my natural teeth?

After a brief adaptation period, chewing will feel virtually the same as using your own natural teeth.

How much time is required for a dental implant placement?

The number of procedures needed to complete the dental implant procedure can depend on a number of factors. Occasionally, we can complete the entire procedure in one session, but on average, a period of 3 – 6 months is needed to allow the site to heal and fully fuse with the jawbone. Once proper healing has taken place, the permanent crown can be placed.

FAQ's

Is the treatment painful?

Every surgery can involve some level of discomfort, but placing one implant normally causes less discomfort than placing several. Adequate amounts of anesthesia and/or other types of sedation are commonly used to minimize any discomfort during the procedure.

How will I feel after the treatment?

Some bruising or swelling in the gum is normal, but this usually subsides with the use of ordinary painkillers. Most patients return to work the next day.

How will I care for my dental implants?

Brushing and flossing should be done as often as your dentist or oral surgeon recommends. A follow-up examination may be scheduled 6 months after the procedure to ensure healing has completed.

