

## Dental Implants



### What are they?

Implants are one way of replacing missing teeth.

Unlike other forms of replacement teeth, dental implants are small metal (mostly titanium) devices not unlike a screw fitting which are inserted into the jaw during surgery.

Teeth, in the form of a crown or bridge are then attached to the implant, or the implant can be used to support dentures.

### What are the benefits?

Some people have difficulties with removable dentures. Implants can overcome the difficulties, in particular for eating and speaking properly and they may improve appearance. If a denture is necessary, implants can greatly improve stability. People will not be able to see that your teeth are supported by implants.

Implants can be used in place of bridges, for example when adjacent teeth are intact or may not be strong enough to support a bridge.

### Are implants for me?

Your dentist should discuss with you whether implants would be right for you, and explain any associated risks.

Patients need to have healthy gums and enough jaw bone to take the implant, although techniques are available to add (graft) additional bone if needed.

Patients must be also prepared to maintain very good oral hygiene and visit the dentist regularly. Implants, like teeth may be lost if oral hygiene is poor.

Implant patients need to be in good general health. Some chronic disease, such as diabetes, osteoporosis or chronic sinus problems, could interfere with healing and make implants more likely to fail. Smoking may also shorten the life of your implant.

Implants involve the treatment over a period of several months. Since they are a complicated form of treatment, implants can be expensive and are not generally available on the NHS.

## What will my dentist do?

Your dentist should tell you about each stage of treatment, who will be carrying out the treatment and a timetable for completion of treatment.

- Bone is exposed in the jaw where the tooth is missing. Then a hole is drilled and the implant is inserted into the bone. This is usually done under local anaesthetic. The gum is then sutured over the implant and it's left to heal for several weeks. This allows the bone to grow around the implant and make it secure.
  
- The second procedure is then planned, in which replacement teeth are mounted onto the implant. This requires a small cut in the gum above the implant. Once the soft tissues have healed, the replacement teeth may be fixed permanently or attached in a way that lets you remove them for cleaning. The replacement teeth might be single or in a group, and possible as a bridge attached to neighbouring natural teeth.
  
- There may be circumstances in which an implant can be placed during the same visit when the tooth is removed.
  
- Maintaining good oral hygiene is important to prevent dental decay and gum disease, which may affect crowned teeth.