

Dental Implants

Has anyone ever suggested **dental implants** to you? Dental implants are not as new as you may think; however they are quickly becoming the “norm”. They are an excellent option for replacing missing teeth.

A dental implant feels and looks like your own tooth. An implant is an artificial root placed into the bone to hold a replacement tooth, bridge, or denture in place. Dental implants are actually more tooth-saving than traditional bridgework, since they do not rely on neighboring teeth for support. Implants, however, are not a good option for everyone. Because they require surgical placement, patients need to be in good health and have healthy gums and adequate bone to support the implant body. (Bone grafting/augmentation is sometimes necessary)

How is an implant placed? First, the implant body, which looks like a screw or a cylinder, is placed into the bone. For the next 3-6 months, the implant body is then allowed to bond with the bone and form an anchor for the artificial tooth. During this time, a “healing head” and a temporary tooth replacement are worn over the implant site.

After adequate healing has occurred, the next step is to take an impression with the abutment in place so that the crown may be fabricated. An abutment is a metal collar that connects the crown to the implant body. Once this is done, the permanent crown is fabricated and attached to the implant and abutment.

There are so many **advantages** to choosing dental implants over more traditional options for tooth replacement. They are more esthetically pleasing – they look most like your natural teeth. They are tooth-saving – they don’t sacrifice the quality of your adjacent teeth. They prevent bone loss by providing an object for the bone to adhere to. Implants are secure and offer freedom to speak and eat with confidence. Lastly, they are RELIABLE – the success rate of a dental implant is excellent!

The most common disadvantage is the initial cost to have an implant placed. However, long-term, they will be less expensive as they generally do not need to be replaced.