

PLAZA HEALTH DENTISTRY

Dental Implants



by Wm. J. Schlotz, D.D.S.

Increasingly, people are choosing dental implants for tooth replacement therapy. An ADA survey revealed that dental implant procedures have increased by almost 50% in the past five years. The reason, likely, is that people are discovering that implants not only feel secure, allowing patients to speak clearly and eat easily, but they also look so natural when restored.

Modern implantology began nearly 50 years ago. However, it is known that ancient Egyptian and Mayan civilizations experimented with re-implanting lost teeth with hand-shaped ivory or wood substitutes. Talk about the pioneers taking the arrows. My guess is their win-ratio was a tad lower than the 90%+ success rate enjoyed by implant patients today.

So exactly what are dental implants? The implant, like their orthopedic brethren (knees, hips, etc), are made of purified titanium. Dental implants are usually placed, and essentially identified, in 3 parts—called the *implant, abutment and restoration*. The implant is a titanium post (about the size of a tooth root) that is inserted into the jaw bone. After a period of time, and due to titanium's extreme biocompatibility, the surrounding bone will FUSE to the implant (called osseointegration). After this time of fusion the abutment is placed onto the implant. Together, the abutment and the implant form tooth substrate.... But without the pretty enamel that we know as teeth.

The restoration is required to finalize the tooth replacement and give the tooth (or teeth) their final functional and esthetic solution. Depending on the patient's needs, desires and finances, the restoration might be a fixed crown or bridge, or a stabilized-removable partial or denture (or some combination). The restoration of dental implants can become quite involved, so interested parties should consult an implant-experienced dentist for further elaboration.

A little known benefit of implants is their ability to actually arrest the insidious BONE LOSS associated with full or partial dentures. Implants provide healthy stimulation to surrounding bone just as teeth originally were designed to do. Imagine discarding removable plates in favor of fixed teeth while saving your bone in the process. Positively affected would be speech, chewing, taste and, of course, self-confidence. Life doesn't always allow for 2nd chances. Dental Implants do.

Smiling Yet?

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