

Tooth Talk

“Hey Doc, I want to replace my missing teeth. What are my options? (Part 4- Dental Implants)”

If patients want to replace their missing teeth with a “fixed” solution and do not want to damage their natural teeth to do so, then dental implants will be their choice of treatment!

A dental implant is a metal screw, made of titanium alloy, that is placed into one’s jaw bone. It replaces the root of the missing tooth. Once the dental implant is fully integrated with the jaw bone, a “post” will be inserted into the dental implant and it will support a “crown” which is the new tooth. The first titanium dental implant was placed in the 1960’s and it has since been gaining popularity at an exponential rate as the treatment of choice for replacing missing teeth.

Dental implants can be utilized to replace a single tooth or multiple missing teeth. They can also be used to support loose dentures, especially full lower dentures which commonly lack support and retention.

“Advantages” of dental implants include:

- no grinding of natural teeth necessary
- a “fixed” solution: they stay in the mouth “permanently”
- great esthetics, comfort, and function
- feel like one’s natural teeth
- patients can floss in-between dental implants and their natural teeth
- no limit on the span of missing teeth dental implants can cover
- maintain the jaw bone due to stimulation through the dental implants
- etc.

“Disadvantages” of dental implants include:

- surgeries are required for the placement of dental implants
- additional bone/gum grafting surgeries may be necessary prior to dental implant placement if there is inadequate existing bone and/or gum
- treatment can take a long time due to necessary healing time involved
- generally higher cost than fixed bridges and removable dentures
- general risks involved with any type of surgery such as pain, swelling, infection, etc.
- potential failure due to body rejection of the dental implants (rare)
- potential failure of the bone/gum graft
- certain conditions, such as smoking and diabetes, may compromise the success of the dental implant treatment
- etc.

In many instances, dental implants are the best treatment of choice for replacing missing teeth. Many people have found that dental implants are well worth of their investment in the time and money involved in the treatment due to the many benefits as discussed above.

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4 Russell St. E., Lindsay
www.drVictorsun.com
705 324-0050

