

Oral and Dental Reconstruction

Implants offer a permanent solution to tooth loss, are virtually indistinguishable from other teeth and are stronger and more durable than their restorative counterparts (bridges and dentures).

Dental implants

Dental implants consist of a titanium screw inserted into the jaw bone and an attached tooth prosthesis or crown. They are among the most successful procedures in dentistry with a five-year success rate of 95% for lower jaw implants and 90% for upper jaw implants.

Single tooth implants

Lower posterior implantation has the highest success rate for all dental implants and there are three steps to dental implants to replace a single missing tooth or multiple teeth:

1. Preparing the jaw bone
2. Placement of the implant
3. Fitting the crown

1. Preparing the jaw bone – this involves drilling a narrow pilot hole on the site to guide the guide the titanium screw that holds a dental implant in place. This requires great skill in order to avoid damage to jaw and face nerves and structures.

2. Placement of the implant – the initial narrow hole is slowly widened to allow for placement of the implant screw. A protective cover screw is placed on top to allow the implant site to heal and the dental implant to anchor (osseointegration) in the jaw bone integrating the implant and the living bone. This takes from three to six months and the implant will fail without the success of this process.

The success rate for upper jaw implants is slightly lower because the upper jaw (especially the posterior section) is less dense than the lower jaw, making successful implantation and osseointegration potentially more difficult to achieve.

3. Fitting the crown or tooth – If in the smile zone, a temporary crown is placed on the implant so the gum can begin to shape itself in a natural way, then after a time, it is replaced with a permanent crown. Implants that are not in the smile zone do not have a temporary crown fitted, only the permanent one.

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Multiple tooth implants

Where multiple teeth need to be replaced implants may be used in conjunction with other restorative procedures for maximum effectiveness.

For example, a single implant can serve to support a crown replacing a single missing tooth. Implants can also be used to support a dental bridge for the replacement of multiple missing teeth, and can be used with dentures to increase stability and reduce gum tissue irritation.

Dental implants may fail for a number of reasons, most often a failure in the osseointegration process. Dental implants may break or become infected (like natural teeth) and crowns may become loose.

On the plus side, dental implants are not susceptible to the formation of cavities; still, poor oral hygiene can lead to the development of peri-implantitis around dental implants. This disease is tantamount to the development of periodontitis (severe gum disease) around a natural tooth.