



## DENTAL IMPLANTS

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### What is a dental implant?

A dental Implant is a titanium, cylindrical, threaded fixture that is used to replace a missing root. The Implant is then used as the foundation for the new crown. Dental Implants can be used to replace a single tooth or a full mouth with no teeth.

Titanium is a unique material in that new bone will grow onto the surface of the implant therefore “fusing” the implant to bone. This process is known as osseointegration and produces prosthetic teeth that are as strong if not stronger than your own natural teeth.

### What are the alternatives?

Leaving a gap, a bridge or a removable denture.

### Benefits over conventional dentistry

**Over dentures:** Implants provide firm, fixed teeth that do not fall out or move when eating, similar to your own natural teeth.

**Over bridge:** Conventional bridgework involves cutting down the adjacent teeth to be used as crowns. This destruction of healthy tooth is unnecessary and will decrease the life span of these teeth. Implants therefore preserve the remaining dentition.

### How long does it take?

It depends on the complexity of the treatment plan. Work may need to be carried out prior to commencing implant therapy. This may include improving oral hygiene, fillings, crowns and extractions. Also in certain situations, pre-operative bone grafts may be required in order to provide sufficient bone for implants.

In general however, osseo-integration takes 5 to 6 months in the upper jaw and 3 to 4 months in the lower jaw further tissue healing, impressions and fitting of the crown will take another month.

In certain situations, it is possible to place an implant and temporary crown at the same time as the extraction. This is normally the case in the anterior mouth where excellent aesthetics are essential.

### Are they successful?

Dental implants produce more predictable long term results than any other form of dental restoration. Well maintained implants can be expected to last for many years and probably for your life time. Occasionally small repairs may be required but this will not decrease the life span of your implant. Just like your own natural teeth, implants require regular follow up and professional cleaning by an implant hygienist.

If on the rare occasion, an implant fails to osseointegrate, I will remove it and after a sufficient healing period, replace it at no further cost.

*(continued overleaf...)*



## **DENTAL IMPLANTS (CONTINUED....)**

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### **Is it uncomfortable?**

Implant surgery is a minor operation. Most patients would say it is less painful than an extraction. But it is wise to avoid significant social engagements for 5 days post operatively as some minor swelling and bruising can occur. For most patients simple pain killers are required, but the surgeon will also prescribe stronger painkillers if necessary. Antibiotics may also be prescribed.

Although most implant operations are straight forward and can be carried out under local anaesthetic, many patients are understandably anxious. For this reason many patients choose to have the 1st stage (implant placement) carried out under intravenous sedation.

### **Are implants expensive?**

Implants may seem expensive initially, but in the long term they are more cost effective without damaging the adjacent teeth. Implants are placed by surgeons who have undergone a long specialist post-graduate training.

### **Will I be without teeth?**

It is normally necessary to construct some form of temporary teeth. These maybe temporary crowns/ bridges/ dentures. It is also possible to use immediate temporary implants to give rigid fixation while the final implants osseo-integrate. In the back of mouth it is not always necessary to place temporaries.

### **What if I do not have enough bone?**

X rays and special investigations such as CT scans may show there is insufficient bone to place implants. This can be corrected by an experienced Oral surgeon using bone grafts. These procedures are now common place and provide predictable results in cases were Implants may not have been previously possible. There is usually a period of 4-6 months delay for mature bone to form, before implants are placed.

### **Treatment Stages for a Dental Implant**

1. Initial consultation giving information and further reading literature
2. Detailed planning appointment with surgeon and prosthodontist
3. Written treatment plan and costs estimate
4. Impressions for study models, diagnostic wax-up and surgical stent
5. Implant placement
6. Regular review appointments
7. Exposure of implant (3-4 months lower jaw, 5-6 months upper jaw)
8. Impressions approximately 2 weeks later
9. Fitting of final crown
10. Follow up and implant hygienist