

What is a dental implant?

A dental implant is an artificial tooth root (synthetic material) that is surgically anchored into your jaw to hold a replacement tooth or bridge in place. The benefit of using implants is that they don't rely on neighboring teeth for support, they are permanent and stable. Implants are a good solution to tooth loss because they look and feel like natural teeth.

Implant material is made from different types of metallic and bone-like ceramic materials that are compatible with body tissue. There are different types of dental implants: the first is placed directly into the jaw bone, like natural tooth roots; the second is used when the jaw structure is limited, therefore, a custom-made metal framework fits directly on the existing bone.

Can anyone receive dental implants?

Talk with your dentist about whether you are an implant candidate. You must be in good health and have the proper bone structure and healthy gums for the implant to stay in place. People who are unable to wear dentures may also be good candidates. If you suffer from chronic problems, such as clenching or bruxism, or systemic

diseases, such as diabetes, the success rate for implants decreases dramatically. Additionally, people who smoke or drink alcohol may not be good candidates.

What can I expect during this procedure?

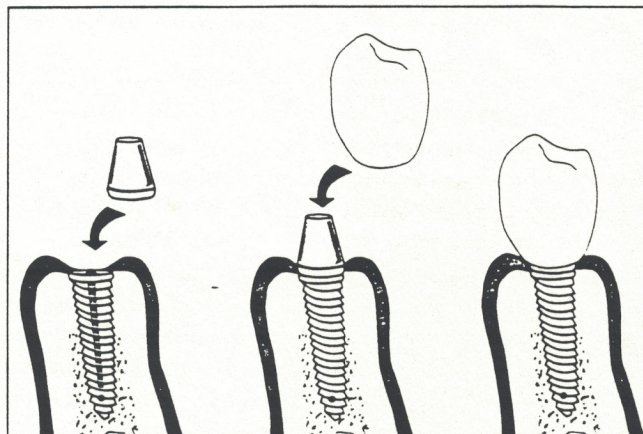
The dentist must perform surgery to anchor the "artificial root" into or on your jaw bone. The procedure is done in the dental office with local anesthesia. Medications may be prescribed for soreness.

How long does the process take?

The process can take up to nine months to complete. Technology, however, is trying to decrease the healing time involved. Each patient heals differently, so times will vary. After the screws and posts are placed surgically, the healing process can take up to six months and the fitting of replacement teeth no more than two months.

What is the success rate of implants?

The success rate for implants depends on the tooth's purpose and location in the mouth. The success rate is about 95 percent for those placed in the front of the lower jaw and 85 percent for those placed in the sides and rear of the upper jaw.



How do I care for implants?

Your overall health may affect the success rate of dental implants. Poor oral hygiene is a big reason why some implants fail. It is important to floss and brush around the fixtures at least twice a day, without metal objects. Your dentist will give you specific instructions on how to care for your new implants. Additional cleanings of up to four times per year may be necessary to ensure that you retain healthy gums.

What is the cost of implants?

Since implants involve surgery and are more involved, they cost more than traditional bridge work. However, some dental procedures and portions of the restoration may be covered by dental and medical insurance policies. Your dentist can help you with this process.

Is my dentist trained in implant therapy?

Dentists who have received training through an extensive program can complete this procedure. Your dentist may perform the procedure or consult with a team of dental health specialists to produce the result discussed with you. Ask your dentist questions about his or her training in implant therapy.

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Sources: "Dental implants: Are they for me?", Quintessence Books, 1993; Compendium, September 1997; Journal of American Dental Association, August 1998; American Academy of Implant Dentistry; American Academy of Implant Prosthodontics; Consumer Reports.