



## Restoring Your Smile With Dental Implants

A healthy and beautiful smile is not only an attractive asset, it is essential to our overall well-being. This is why it is important to take care of your teeth and to see your dentist for routine care. Should you have the misfortune of losing a tooth due to trauma, dental decay, or gum disease it is important that you seek treatment to replace the tooth as soon as possible. Fortunately modern dentistry offers remarkable solutions for maintaining and restoring smiles.

One of the most significant dental innovations in recent times has been the development of an artificial tooth root that can be placed into the jaw where a tooth is missing. Known as a dental implant this restoration can support a new crown, a bridge, or stabilize a denture. While dental implants have been around for decades recent advances in dental technology and materials have significantly improved the success rate and availability of this treatment option.

Dental implants offer many advantages over the more traditional methods for replacing missing teeth. First and foremost, among the benefits of a dental implant is that it comes the closest of all of the restorative choices to replicating the look, feel and function of a natural tooth. Furthermore, it is the only method of tooth replacement that does not require the involvement or preparation of the adjacent teeth. A dental implant also stimulates bone remodeling to prevent shrinkage in areas where teeth are missing and helps to restore facial contours in areas where significant bone loss has occurred.

A dental implant is a small surgical fixture that is placed into the jawbone to function in the same manner as the root of tooth. Just as a natural root anchors a natural tooth, an implant provides a stable and durable foundation for a replacement tooth. Dental implants are fabricated from biocompatible materials that interface with surrounding tissues and the entire body in a safe way while fusing to the adjacent bone



through a process known as osseointegration. Successful osseointegration is the most important factor in determining the stability and longevity of a dental implant. The success rate of dental implants is close to 98%, the highest percentage of any implanted surgical device. Most of the



dental implants used today are made from titanium. High strength bio ceramic materials are also available.

Your dentist can explain to you all of the treatment options for replacing missing teeth and determine if you are a candidate for dental implants. There are several things to consider before planning an implant procedure including your health history, the quantity and quality of the supporting bone available for the implant, the time commitment involved, and the total expense for the entire process. A health history that includes uncontrolled diabetes, cancer, smoking, alcoholism, severe periodontal disease and certain medications can mean that dental implants are not possible. If you are deemed to be candidate, your dentist may recommend an additional procedure like a bone graft or a sinus lift be done prior to implant placement to ensure that you have sufficient bone support for a successful outcome. Because the implant process has many requirements, placing and restoring an implant might involve a team of dental professionals.

As you prepare to restore your smile with implants you will undergo a more thorough and detailed assessment of your mouth and jaws. This includes dental models, x-rays, and 3D scans. The data and measurements obtained with these records are needed to make sure the implant is placed in exactly the right position in the bone.

Most implant placement can be done in the dental office under local anesthesia. The actual procedure involves the dentist surgically exposing the site for the implant and utilizing a series of special instruments carefully creating a socket into which a titanium (or ceramic) post can be inserted. Once the implant has been placed the jawbone is allowed to heal and the implant given time to fully osseointegrate (fuse to the bone) over a period of three to six months. When both these processes are assessed as completed, attachments can then be placed in the implants and the fabrication of the final replacement tooth, bridge, or denture started. In some situations placement of a temporary dental restoration for cosmetic reasons prior to healing and osseointegration may be allowed providing the implant has a certain level of stability and will not be subject to any undue stresses.



Once you are enjoying your fully restored and beautiful smile, it is important to keep in mind that implants require the same care as your natural teeth. Although dental implants and the



restorations will not decay, bone loss and other complications can occur. Excellent oral hygiene and routine dental care to avoid any problems that will compromise the stability and success your implants are essential. After having invested so much in your new smile it is important to make sure it lasts a lifetime.