

Dental Implants

Fact Sheet

Dental implants are now a reliable and straightforward treatment for the replacement of missing teeth. They have many advantages over other forms of treatment. Implant placement is routine and usually without complications. Long term outcome is generally excellent with appropriate aftercare.

What are dental implants?

A dental implant is a specially designed titanium 'root' that is placed into your jawbone which fuses with the bone over a period of several weeks. Once it has fused ('osseointegrated') with your jaw, it provides a secure foundation for replacement teeth or to fix a denture or bridge.

What is a dental implant used for?

Typically, implants are used to replace missing teeth and to fill any unsightly gaps in your teeth. They can also be very helpful if you are finding difficulty talking or chewing with loose dentures.

Assessment

Full assessment of your particular requirements and suitability for dental implant treatment is the first step. This takes place with one of our implant surgeons and usually takes about thirty minutes. In addition to study models, both X-rays and clinical photographs will be taken to aid in assessment.

You may be unsuitable for dental implants if:

- You have poor oral hygiene
- You have active gum disease
- You smoke or drink alcohol excessively – an implant is twice as likely to fail if you smoke
- We may advise you to see our in-house dental hygienist for treatment and advice as part of your implant replacement programme.

Implant placement

Some practices offer immediate placement of implants after tooth extraction but studies show that success rates for that approach can be as low as 65%. Ideally, having a dental implant takes place in two separate stages. The first stage is implant placement which is carried out in a routine minor procedure in the dedicated implant theatre in our clinic in Bristol. You may opt to have treatment under sedation provided by our Consultant Anaesthetist if you wish. You will be given some special instructions to follow if you choose to have sedation.

The jaw is first numbed with local anaesthetic so that any discomfort is minimal. A small incision is made in the gum over where the implant is to be placed. A hole is carefully drilled in the jawbone at the exact spot where the implant is to be positioned. The titanium dental implant is then either tapped or screwed into its final position and a protective cap placed on top of it. We routinely use Straumann dental implants. In more complex cases, artificial bone grafting may be required.

You may expect some mild discomfort for a few days after implant placement –this can be relieved with mild painkillers. It takes between 6 weeks and 6 months for the implant to fuse with the jawbone. During this period it is usual for you to be provided with a temporary bridge or denture and you will need to return to the clinic a number of times e.g. for removal of sutures and to check that everything is going smoothly.

Replacement teeth

Once the implant has set solidly the next stage is to replace the missing tooth or teeth, using the titanium implant as an artificial root or anchor. An implant may support just one tooth (a single tooth implant) or may be used to support a bridge or dentures. Sometimes multiple implants may be recommended depending upon how much bone there is in the jaw and the treatment planned. Of course, this is an ideal opportunity for you to improve the cosmetic appearance of your teeth, as the replacement tooth or teeth can be made to look very natural.

Advantages of dental implants

Whilst more costly than alternatives such as bridges and dentures, implants do have significant advantages:

1. A dental implant is just like a replacement tooth so you can forget all about it and don't have to worry about it working loose or falling out
2. A dental implant is much easier to maintain and keep clean than a bridge or dentures
3. As mentioned previously, surrounding teeth are unaffected by the presence of a dental implant. On the other hand, a bridge 'hangs off' the teeth next to it and may damage them. A dental implant may also provide additional structural support for adjacent teeth
4. The presence of an implant in the jaw preserve bone - bone loss in the jaw is a feature of ageing so implants may help preserve your youthful appearance
5. Improved appearance –dental implants can be indistinguishable from natural teeth so your smile looks completely natural
6. Improved function – you can eat and speak without worrying

How long does a dental implant last?

Typically a dental implant will give you a lifetime of service, provided you look after it. It can be a surprisingly cost-effective solution to a dental problem. An implant cannot decay, but must be cared for like a natural tooth using brushes and floss to prevent gum problems. It is important to have your dental implant checked at routine examination appointments. Our hygienist will give you straightforward instructions on how to look after your new replacement tooth or teeth. Regular brushing and flossing are usually all that is required. This aspect is very important in determining long term outcome of dental implants.

How successful are dental implants?

To date three million Straumann implants have been used worldwide. Straumann implants are the most tested and proven dental implants in existence. Long term studies show success rates as high as 97%.

What happens if a dental implant fails?

Sometimes, despite the best technique and care a dental implant becomes loose and needs to be removed. In these circumstances a further implant or alternative treatment (including bone grafting) may be needed.

How much do dental implants cost?

Typically a single tooth implant with a replacement tooth costs from £2200. The cost will vary according to complexity and you will be given a written quotation after your consultation and assessment. When multiple dental implants are placed the cost per tooth reduces significantly.

talk to **me**

If you would like to discuss any aspect of this treatment please contact us on:

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