

DENTAL IMPLANTS

Dental implants are used to replace the roots of missing teeth and can replace one tooth, several teeth or can be used if there are no teeth present. Any person who has lost one or more teeth due to injury, periodontal disease or decay may be a candidate for dental implants. Traditional options for replacing teeth such as complete dentures, fixed bridges or removable partial dentures, can be restored with implants as well.

Conventional dentures alone can be painful, can break, become lost and often get loose. A strong consideration for new or existing denture patients (especially if the dentures are sore or loose) would be dentures with the support of implants. Dental implants, when properly planned and placed, can be used to anchor and stabilize a complete denture in your mouth. Chewing efficiency with dentures is at best 20% of your natural teeth. I have had numerous patients who have felt they made a very wise decision having their dentures supported by implants. These patients are able to eat and to chew foods more easily and more efficiently. Patients have a feeling of security because they know the dentures will stay in place, which adds to their feeling of self-confidence.

Another tremendous advantage of implants is that of bone preservation. Without teeth, the jawbone naturally resorbs (shrinks) as you age. That is why a denture continually gets loose and needs to be relined every couple of years and periodically remade. Eventually, there may be so much bone shrinkage that it may become impossible to be refitted for dentures. Where implants are placed, the jawbone will not resorb. Implants not only maintain the height of bone but also help to preserve facial contours, which otherwise change with the loss of bone structure.

As mentioned above, dental implants can also be used to replace one tooth, several teeth or an entire mouth of missing teeth. When a single tooth is missing, it is traditionally replaced with a fixed bridge. The teeth adjacent to the vacant space would be prepared for crowns and a three-unit bridge (depending on your situation) and would then be cemented into place. With the advanced technology of today's implants, a single tooth implant-supported crown can be placed without the need to treat the adjacent teeth. It also becomes easier to floss and clean individual teeth because they are not connected as they are in a fixed bridge.

The same concept can be used where multiple teeth were lost. By strategic placement of implants, you no longer have to deal with the inconvenience of removable partial dentures. My patients, who have replaced removable partial dentures with fixed, implant supported bridges, can't believe the difference that it makes in their ability to eat.

Because today's implants are strong, durable, can't decay and feel more like your natural teeth, they can be a much better option for tooth replacement or in combination with traditional tooth replacement. Implants are esthetic, reliable, have a high degree of patient satisfaction. They restore proper function to a patient's mouth where traditional treatments fall short.

