



by Dr. Marcus S. Tappan, DDS

IMPLANTS VS. DENTURES

For many years, bridges and dentures were the standard way of replacing lost teeth. However, about 30 years ago a new technique was developed that used metal devices surgically attached directly to the jawbone to replace missing teeth. This technique is called dental implants.

The technique of using dental implants has grown rapidly in popularity. Surveys show the use of dental implants has nearly tripled since 1986. Implants are now considered a great option for patients missing natural teeth because they act as secure anchors for artificial replacement teeth and eliminate many of the problems caused by dentures and bridges.

Here are some frequently asked questions about dental implants:

How are implants different from dentures or bridges?

Dentures are removable devices that are custom fitted to the patient's mouth. Because they are removable, dentures can, in some cases, cause discomfort and create problems when eating or talking.

Bridges are non-removable devices that are permanently cemented in place. In most cases the natural teeth serve as anchors for the bridge. Over time the natural teeth can become decayed or compromised and even lost due to altering their natural state.

Implants are actually similar to the actual roots of a natural tooth. The greatest advantage in having an implant versus a bridge is that they are more permanent, more aesthetic, and do not compromise the adjacent teeth.



How are implants put in place?

A dentist can determine if you are a candidate for dental implants. You will be evaluated based on a number of things including dental health, lifestyle, bone quality, and oral hygiene habits.

Once positive evaluation has been made, the procedure can be scheduled. The implantation can be done in the dentist's office with local sedation. In the first step of this procedure the implants are surgically placed in the patient's jawbone below the gums.

For 4 to 6 months following the surgery, the implants gradually integrate with the jawbone. During this time the patient can wear temporary dentures and eat soft foods. Also, during this period the dentist will fashion the replacement teeth that will be attached to the implants.

Once the integration is completed, the dentist will uncover the implants and attach small posts that will protrude from the gums and serve as anchors for the artificial teeth. When the posts are in place, the artificial teeth are attached and the procedure is complete.

Is the procedure painful?

No, the patient is under local sedation during the surgical procedures. However, there can be some swelling and discomfort for five to seven days after the procedure.

How much does it cost and how long does it take?

The entire process from evaluation to the placement of the replacement teeth can take from 4 months to a year. The costs may range from \$1500 to \$3000 per implant.

How long do implants last?

Implants are very durable and will last many years. They require the same care and maintenance as natural teeth, including brushing, flossing, and regular dental check-ups.

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