



Andover Smile Centre

Orthodontic Clinic and Implant Studio

A Guide to Dental Implants

What are dental implants?

A dental implant is a titanium metal rod which is placed into the jawbone. It is used to support one or more false teeth. In practice, both the false teeth and their supporting rod are known as 'implants'.

Are implants safe and how long will they last?

Implants are a well-established, tried-and-tested treatment. Over 95% of modern implants should last for many years with the right care.

I have some of my own teeth. Can I still have implants?

Yes. You can have any number of teeth replaced with implants - from one single tooth to a complete set.

Can implants always be used to replace missing teeth?

It depends on the condition of the bone in your jaw. Your dentist will arrange for a number of special tests to find out the amount of bone still there. If there is not enough, or if it isn't healthy enough, it may not be possible to place implants without grafting bone into the area first.

Do implants hurt?

Placing the implants means a small operation. This can be done using a simple local anaesthetic, and sometimes with sedation if you are very nervous. Sometimes the dentist needs to use a general anaesthetic for complex cases. You will not feel any pain at the time, but you may feel some discomfort during the week after the surgery. This is usually due to having stitches, and the normal healing process.

How long does treatment take?

Your dentist will be able to give you a rough timetable before the treatment starts.

Usually the permanent teeth are fitted 6 to 9 months after the implants are put in, but many implant systems now allow the time to be as short as 3 months.

Some teeth can now even be fitted at the same time as the implants (known as immediate implants) but you should check with your dentist to see whether these are suitable for you.

What about after care?

Your dentist may give you some pain relief after the surgery, or check whether you have them at home to take over the next few days if you need them. Your dentist may also prescribe antibiotics. Don't smoke, exercise or drive for the rest of the day. Don't rinse the area and only eat soft foods. However it is important that you keep your mouth clean by brushing - but do not poke the implant site. You can use a chlorhexidine mouthwash every day during the first week after surgery (you can get these from supermarkets and chemists). Check with your dentist if he or she feels this is appropriate.

What happens next?

The implants need to bond with the bone after they have been put in. This usually takes at least 3 months in the lower jaw and 6 months in the upper jaw. Sometimes the implants may be stable enough when they are fitted for the artificial teeth to be fitted much sooner than this.

Is the treatment expensive?

Unfortunately, yes. However, in many situations, the cost of the treatment is only a little more than the cost of more conventional treatment with crowns and bridges. Over the longer term, implants are usually a more cost-effective and satisfactory option.

There are advantages too. An implant to replace a single tooth avoids the need to cut down the teeth either side for crowns to support a bridge. Normal dentures often mean you can't eat or speak well, due to the dentures moving about. But teeth attached to an implant don't cause this problem as they are anchored to the bone more firmly than natural teeth.

Where do I get this treatment?

Talk to your dentist, so you can be referred to a specialist (implantologist) for assessment and treatment. Your dentist may already carry out some or all of this type of treatment and will give you the advice you need. Remember to ask exactly what treatment is proposed, what experience the dentist has in this work, the total cost of the treatment and what the alternatives are.

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