

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT DENTAL IMPLANTS

1. How long do dental implants last?

How long do teeth last? Implants should last a lifetime. However, we all can sight examples where teeth have not served for a person's lifetime. We know that dental problems mostly stem from improper home care or lack of treatment when needed. The same holds true for implants. With proper care and routine dental check-ups they should last a lifetime

2. Is the placement of implants painful? How long does it take?

Implant placement usually does not result in much post-operative discomfort - usually the patient takes Tylenol or Advil for about 2-5 days. If more extensive treatment is needed, for example bone grafts or many implants, then the post-operative course may require more time and medication. Depending on the complexity and number of implants being placed, the procedure can take between 30 minutes to 3-4 hours. Our office staff can give you a time estimate based on your particular case.

3. How long does the whole dental implant process take?

The first phase of treatment, after a detailed evaluation and treatment plan, usually is the actual placement of the implants. This procedure is generally done in the doctor's office during one visit. Most implants will remain covered, underneath the gums, for 3 to 6 months. During this time, osseointegration --the biological bonding of the jawbone to the implant--occurs. Through this healing period, you will probably wear your modified denture or a temporary denture or bridge and maintain normal activities without restriction. You will need to follow a modified, soft diet for the first couple of weeks. *The second phase of the procedure is usually 3-6 months after implant placement*. At this time, the top of the implants will be uncovered from under the gums and a small metal post or extension will be attached to the implant(s). *In the third phase, which usually starts 2-6 weeks after the second phase*, your new replacement teeth are created and fitted. This phase involves a series of appointments to make impressions of your mouth and to "try-in" your replacement teeth at key steps in their fabrication. The try-in sessions are necessary to ensure that the size, shape, color and fit of your new teeth will completely blend with and match your individual facial characteristics and remaining natural teeth (if any). The third phase is usually completed within 4 to 8 weeks. Total treatment time for most implant cases will usually be 5-8 months

4. Are dental implants experimental?

Absolutely not! Dental implants have a long history of use and success. Implants are the most thoroughly researched procedure in the history of dentistry and, while no procedure is 100% successful, the current technology has resulted in very high success rates in the hands of well-trained and experienced clinicians. Dental implants are carefully regulated by the FDA and a number of implant systems have been approved by the American Dental Association.

5. Are dental implants covered by insurance?

Yes and no --sorry to be so vague, but some carriers pay for them, some don't, and some pay a portion of the costs. Most dental plans do not provide for the surgical placement of implants. However, many do provide some restorative benefits. Surprisingly, the best coverage often times can be through your medical insurance if you are missing all or most of your teeth. In this case the implant procedure may be considered jaw reconstruction with restoration of normal chewing function and sometimes medical insurance will cover all or part of the treatment. In many instances we have been able to help get significant coverage for patients, but unfortunately it is not very predictable. Our staff will work hard to see that you get the best possible benefit from your insurance.

6. How expensive are dental implants?

The procedure can involve a significant investment, with surgical fees ranging from \$2,000 - \$2,500 for the three phase procedure per tooth. However, the cost of non-treatment can be considerably more expensive. Continual bone loss occurs from the wearing of full dentures (plates) and partials. This progressive loss of bone can eventually cause nerve exposure, jaw fracture and a complete inability to function with regular dentures. Correction at this point may be very expensive and can involve extensive bone grafts, which may require hospitalization and an extended recovery period. Placing implants before the bone loss becomes severe not only saves money in the long run, but also slows the bone loss process, increasing the likelihood of long term success.

For more information on dental implants, please contact our office.

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