

Implants

Crowns and conventional bridges or dentures may not be your only options when replacing missing teeth. For some people, dental implants offer a smile that looks and feels very natural. Surgically placed below the gums over a series of appointments, implants fuse to the jawbone and serve as a base for individual replacement teeth, bridges or a denture.

Implants offer stability because they fuse to your bone. Integration of the implants into your jaw also helps your replacement teeth feel more natural and some people also find the secure fit more comfortable than conventional substitutes.

Candidates for dental implants need to have healthy gums and adequate bone to support the implant. A thorough evaluation by your dentist will help determine whether you are a good candidate for dental implants.

What is involved in placing implants?

First, surgery is performed to place the anchor. Surgery can take up to several hours, and up to six months may be required for the bone to grow around the anchor and firmly hold it in place. Some implants require a second surgery in which a post is attached to connect the anchor to the replacement teeth. With other implants, the anchor and post are already attached and are placed at the same time.

After the gums have had several weeks to heal, the next step is begun. The artificial teeth are made and fitted to the post portion of the anchor. Because several fittings may be required, this step can take one to two months to complete.

Implant surgery can be done either in a dental office or in a hospital, depending upon a number of factors. A local or general anesthetic may be used. Usually pain medications and, when necessary, antibiotics are prescribed. Your dentist will give you instructions on diet and oral hygiene.