

COSMETIC DENTISTRY

Implants

An implant crown to replace a single missing tooth causes no damage to adjacent teeth and has a good long-term prognosis

What are implants?

A dental implant is an artificial tooth root, usually made of titanium, that is surgically anchored into your jawbone to hold a replacement tooth, bridge or denture in place. The benefit of using implants is that they do not rely on neighbouring teeth for support and are permanent and stable. Implants are a good solution to tooth loss because they look good and feel like natural teeth.



Can anyone have implants?

Implants tend to cost more and are not suitable for all mouths. You will need to be assessed and have healthy gums and be in general good health. It will also depend on the condition of your bone as you need to have enough good bone to support the titanium posts and replacement teeth, although sometimes bone can be grafted to help. Some chronic diseases such as diabetes, osteoporosis and chronic sinus problems may make implants more likely to fail. Chronic gum disease and smoking can also increase the failure rate.

A complete or partial denture can be attached to a number of implants

How are implants placed?

Treatment is usually carried out under local anaesthetic. The dentist will expose the bone where the implant needs to be placed and then drill a hole and insert the titanium post. The gum is then stitched over the post and left to heal for 3-4 months to allow the post to fuse with the jawbone and become firm, making it secure. You may need to wear a temporary denture until the permanent teeth are placed.

What happens next?

A second procedure is performed to expose the top of the implants through the gum to allow the permanent replacement teeth to be fitted onto the implants. Some teeth can be fitted at the same time as the implants but your specialist would inform you if you are suitable.

How do I look after my implants?

Most teeth attached to implants can only be fitted and removed by the dentist but some dentures can be removed for cleaning. You will be given detailed advice on how to look after your implants and will need to attend the dentist regularly to monitor the health of your implants.

How long do implants last?

Generally, implants will last as long as you care for them. They are an expensive investment so it is absolutely essential to maintain good oral hygiene and visit the dentist and hygienist regularly. Implants can develop gum disease and become loose, just like teeth.

Very occasionally implants do not fuse with the jawbone and become loose during the healing period after they have been placed. If this occurs, the implant may have to be removed and the jawbone allowed to heal before considering if another implant can be placed there again.

Where can I get treatment?

Speak to us about whether you might be suitable for implants. We will be able to tell you about the likely costs and also any alternative treatments available. You will then be referred to a local specialist implantologist or prosthodontist for assessment and treatment.