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DENTAL IMLANTS

Dental implants are changing the way people live. They are designed to provide a foundation for replacement teeth which look, feel and function like natural teeth. The person who has lost teeth regains the ability to eat virtually anything, knowing that teeth appear natural and that facial contours will be preserved they can smile with confidence. The adjacent teeth are preserved when implants are used.

What are Dental Implants?

The implants themselves are tiny titanium alloy screws, which are inserted into the jawbone where teeth are missing. These screws act as tooth root substitutes. They are surgically placed into the jawbone. The bone bonds with the titanium alloy surface, creating a strong foundation for artificial teeth. Small posts are then attached to the implant, which protrude through the gums. These posts provide stable anchors for artificial replacement teeth. Implants also help preserve facial structure, preventing the bone deterioration that occurs when teeth are missing.

The Surgical Procedure

For most patients, the placement of dental implants involves two surgical procedures. First, implants are placed within your jawbone. For the first three to six months following surgery, the implants are beneath the surface of the gums gradually bonding with the jawbone. You should be able to wear temporary dentures and eat a soft diet during this time.

After the implant has integrated to the jawbone, the second phase begins. The implant is uncovered and a healing post is placed through the gum tissue. The gum tissue will heal around the post and then allow the restorative dentist access to the implant. The dentist will then make a custom fitting tooth which is attached to the implant. Once the implant is placed, the procedure usually takes six to eight months to receive a functioning tooth. Most patients experience minimal disruption in their daily life.

Surgical Advances

In certain cases, recent advances in dental implant technology can be used. Drs. Nelson and Kempers are able to place single stage implants. These implants do not require a second procedure to uncover them but do require a minimum of six weeks of healing time before placing artificial teeth on them. There are even situations where the implants can be placed at the same time as a tooth extraction further minimizing the number of surgical procedures. Advances in dental implant technology have made it possible in select cases, to extract teeth, and place implants with crowns at one visit. This process, called "immediate loading" greatly simplifies the surgical process.

Who actually performs the implant placement?

Implants are a team effort between an Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeon and a Restorative Dentist. While Dr. Nelson and Dr. Kempers performs the actual implant surgery, and initial tooth extractions and bone grafting. The restorative dentist (your dentist) fits and makes the permanent tooth which attaches to the implant. Your dentist will also make any temporary prosthesis needed during the implant process.

What types of prostheses are available?

A single prosthesis (crown) is used to replace one missing tooth – each prosthetic tooth attaches to its own implant. A partial prosthesis (fixed bridge) can replace two or more teeth and may require only two or three implants. A complete dental prosthesis (fixed bridge) replaces all the teeth in your upper or lower jaw. The number of implants varies depending upon which type of complete prosthesis (removable or fixed) is recommended. A removable prosthesis (over denture) attaches to a bar or ball in socket attachments, whereas a fixed one is permanent and removable only by the dentist.

We perform in-office implant surgery in a hospital-style operating suite, thus optimizing the level of sterility. Inpatient hospital implant surgery is for patients who have special medical or anesthetic needs or for those who need extensive bone grafting.

Why dental implants?

Once you learn about dental implants, you finally realize there is a way to improve your life. When you lose several teeth – whether it is a recent situation or something you have lived with for years – chances are you have never become fully accustomed to losing teeth. Dental implants can be your doorway to renewed self-confidence and peace of mind.

A Swedish scientist and orthopedic surgeon, Dr. Per-Ingvar Brånemark, developed this concept for oral rehabilitation more than thirty-five years ago. With his pioneering research, Dr. Brånemark opened the door to a lifetime of renewed comfort and self-confidence for millions of individuals facing the frustration and embarrassment of tooth loss.

Why would you select dental implants over more traditional types of restorations?

Traditional bridges require that normal tooth structure is sacrificed so that a crown can be placed and that a bridge can span the edentulous space. Removing a denture or a “partial” at night may be inconvenient, not to mention that dentures that slip can be uncomfortable and can be embarrassing.

Are you a candidate for implants?

If you are considering implants, your mouth must be examined thoroughly and your medical and dental history reviewed. If your mouth is not ideal for implants, ways of improving outcome, such as bone grafting, may be recommended.

What type of anesthesia is used?

The majority of dental implants and one graft can be performed in the office under IV anesthesia.

Do Implants need special care?

Once the implants are in place, they will serve you well for many years if you take care of them and keep your mouth healthy. This means taking the time for good oral hygiene (brushing and flossing) and keeping regular appointments with your dental specialists.