



Implants

What are implants?

Implants are titanium fixtures placed into the jawbone. They replace the natural root of a tooth that has been lost. Once the bone has healed around them (osseointegrated) teeth can be built on the implants to replace natural teeth that are missing. Teeth are either secured permanently to the implants or dentures are constructed, that are then secured to the implants.

How can implants help you?

The development of Implants is one of the most significant recent advances in dentistry. For the first time a lost tooth can be replaced in its entirety all the way from root to crown. Unlike bridges there is no need to remove healthy tissue from adjacent teeth. The first implants have now been in place for over 30 years and are still going strong!

Can all lost teeth be replaced with Implants?

In principle implants can be used to replace any number of lost teeth, from a single tooth to a complete set. Some people may not be suitable for implant treatment due to medical conditions or a lack of available bone. Other patients may require a procedure to augment the bone before implants can be placed. Smoking can lead to a far higher failure rate in implants. If you smoke you are strongly advised to give up before having implant treatment.

What treatment is involved?

Although a number of visits will be required for the planning stages there are usually three stages to the actual treatment

- 1: The gum is lifted and the implants are placed into the bone. The gum is then stitched back and the implants left to heal.
- 2: The gum is again lifted and a threaded post is inserted into the implant. The gum is stitched around the post and left to heal. In some cases this stage may not be necessary.
- 3: An impression is taken and a new tooth made to fit into the implant.

How long does it take?

Every case is different but usually the healing after stage 1 takes 4-6 months

After stage 2 the healing takes about 6 weeks

The final teeth are fitted about 3 weeks after the impression at stage 3.

Will it be done at the surgery?

Most cases are treated at the surgery, usually under local anesthetic by Andrew Tierney. It is often easier to insert new teeth than to remove the old ones. More complicated cases are referred to a hospital specialist.

What happens if things go wrong?

The success rate for implants ranges from 90-98%. On the rare occasion that things do go wrong it is often possible to remove the failed implant and place a new implant after a suitable healing period. It is essential to maintain thorough and effective oral hygiene around implants and to attend regular review appointments to prevent problems from developing.

Will I be without teeth until the final fitting?

There may be a short period after Stage 1 surgery when you will have missing teeth, this is simply because some swelling is obviously expected. For the rest of the healing periods patients are usually provided with a denture to fill any gaps.