

Dental Implant FAQs



How do I know if I'm suitable?

Any missing tooth could be considered for an implant but not every space or every patient will be suitable.

The patient may have several factors that complicate things like smoking, excessive alcohol drinking, gum disease and certain medical problems.

The space needs a healthy amount of bone and gum tissue (although this can be improved) and to be in a safe area for treatment.

What will the dentist look at?

The dentist will need to know your medical history and any other factors like smoking that may affect your treatment. They will also look in your mouth, look at x rays and or 3D scans, take impressions and take photos.

Can I do anything to help my suitability?

Stability of your health and mouth are key. If there are any medical problems you suffer with then we (and you doctor) will try and help you control these. In the mouth we want to work in areas without infection, gum disease or excessive wear and tear. If you're not there yet then we can work with you to help you improve your oral health.

How long will it take?

This varies greatly from case to case with the simplest taking a few weeks and the most complex taking several months. This time might vary depending on the age and health of the patient and the quantity and quality of bone available.

Dental Implant FAQs (Cont.)

There seems to be a lot to take in?

Before you agree to any treatment you can expect a full written plan with a summary of the treatment involved, the alternatives, the pros and cons, things to expect, treatment times and cost.

How long will the implants last?

The key to the implants lasting is looking after them - it is not fit and forget! Ensure you look after them at home and that your dentist and hygienist regularly help you to maintain them. It's wrong to say they'll last forever only because they are a man made replacement (much like a hip replacement is) but if looked after they can last for a long time. At 10 years, 95% of implants placed should be functioning with no problems.

How many teeth can be replaced by implants?

A single implant can replace a missing tooth and hold a new crown in its place. If you are missing more than one tooth then either several separate implant crowns could be used or fewer implants linked together by a bridge (literally teeth connected together that bridge the gap between the implants). If you are missing a complete set of teeth then 2-4 implants will support a clip in denture or 4-6 will support a bridge.

There are times when we might need to use more implants than this for example if they are subjected to a lot of stress (tooth grinding) or if there is a medical or dental reason that we might expect our implants to need to survive in a harsh environment.

What stages do I need to go through?

- Removal of the culprit tooth
- (Most often) a short period of healing
- Placement of an implant and if needed a bone graft
- Another small period of healing (the bone around the implant needs to heal close to its surface)
- After several weeks, if it hasn't already been placed then a small gum healing screw is placed in the implant. This stands proud of the gum and allows the gum around the implant to heal.
- A couple of weeks later an impression of the implant is taken
- A specialised lab make the new crown and this is fitted a few weeks later