

Frequently Asked Questions

1. **Who is a candidate for dental implant treatment?**

Nearly everyone who is missing one or more teeth and is in general good health. A few medical conditions can undermine the success of implant treatment, like uncontrolled diabetes or tobacco use, but very few conditions would preclude implant treatment altogether. Even people who have lost a significant amount of bone can qualify, with additional procedures to add bone or create new bone.

2. **Is anyone too old for dental implants?**

Overall health and a desire to improve quality of life are bigger factors than age. When dental implants were developed in the 1950s, implant-supported replacement teeth were one solution for older patients who were missing all their teeth; today, many patients well into their 90s have successful dental implant treatment.

3. **How long does it take to complete treatment?**

Treatment can take several weeks or several months, depending on the quality of the bone into which the implants are placed. If procedures are needed to augment the bone, the total treatment time is usually 6 to 9 months.

4. **Is the procedure painful?**

Most patients say the discomfort is far less than they expected and is much like having a tooth extracted, and most are made comfortable after treatment with just Tylenol or Advil.

5. **Is it necessary to have one implant placed for each missing tooth?**

No. In fact, it is possible to replace all of the lower teeth with an overdenture supported by only 2-4 implants. That said, it is sometimes recommended to replace missing posterior teeth with individual implants to provide additional chewing strength in patients who have most of their natural teeth.

6. **How long do implants last?**

Dental implants are intended to be long lasting. By comparison, research shows the typical tooth-supported bridge lasts 7–10 years, and partials and dentures about 5 years. Many factors contribute to implants' longevity, including effective oral hygiene, home care and regular maintenance visits to the dentist or dental specialist.

7. **Do dental implants ever fail?**

Dental implant treatment is one of the most successful procedures in the medical/dental field, with a success rate of over 95%. Occasionally, the bone does not completely bond to the implants; in these cases, new implants can be placed.

8. Does the body ever reject dental implants?

Dental implants are made of biocompatible titanium, which is well accepted by the human body and is also used for orthopedic implants like hip and knee replacements.

9. Is it possible to use an existing denture with dental implants?

Sometimes. This can only be determined in consultation with a dentist or dental specialist.

10. If dental implants preserve bone, why would a dentist recommend a tooth-supported bridge?

Implant treatment is usually the treatment of choice for patients who qualify; it has become much less common for dentists to recommend fixed bridges instead.

11. Might a dental specialist recommend extracting a tooth and replacing it with an implant-supported crown?

When natural teeth are failing due to, e.g., severe gum disease that has eroded the supporting bone, it can be preferable to extract the teeth, eliminate the disease and infection, and replace the teeth with implant-supported crowns/bridges. Similarly, when a tooth that has had a root canal is failing, needs to be retreated and has an unfavorable prognosis, it is preferable to extract the tooth and replace it with an implant-supported crown. Teeth with severe fractures or advanced cavities also are usually extracted and are ideal candidates for replacement with dental implants.

12. How would I care for my dental implants?

A single implant-supported crown is cleaned like a natural tooth, with regular brushing and flossing. Implant-supported bridges that replace a few teeth are cleaned like tooth-supported bridges, brushing and flossing with a floss threader. For dentures attached to implants, it is necessary to clean the implant attachments and the overdenture. In all cases, patients should see their regular dentist and hygienist at least twice a year.

13. What is the cost of implant treatment?

Dental implant treatment reflects an investment in overall health, appearance and well being, preserving the integrity of facial structures as well as replacing missing teeth. The cost varies with the number of teeth replaced, the type of implant-supported teeth, and any additional procedures that may be needed to achieve the desired esthetic and functional results. Implant treatment usually costs more than other methods of tooth replacement in the immediate term but is more cost-effective in the longer term, since bridges, partials and dentures may need to be replaced every 5-10 years. Your projected cost can only be determined by examination and consultation with a dental specialist.

14. Is dental implant treatment covered by dental or medical insurance?

Policies differ, but it is rare to get total coverage under dental insurance. Medical insurance may apply in very rare cases, such as when people missing all their teeth have related medical complications, or have suffered certain work-related injuries or accidents. Medicare does not cover implant treatment.