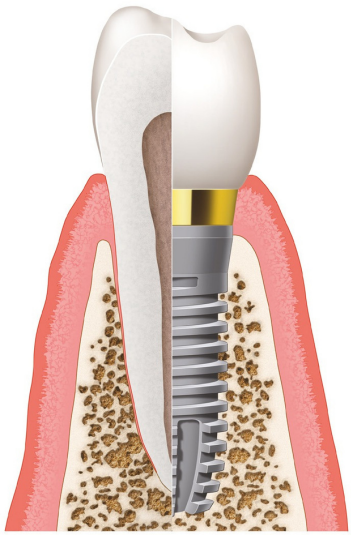
LONDON
DENTAL ARTS

A PATIENT'S GUIDE TO DENTAL IMPLANTS

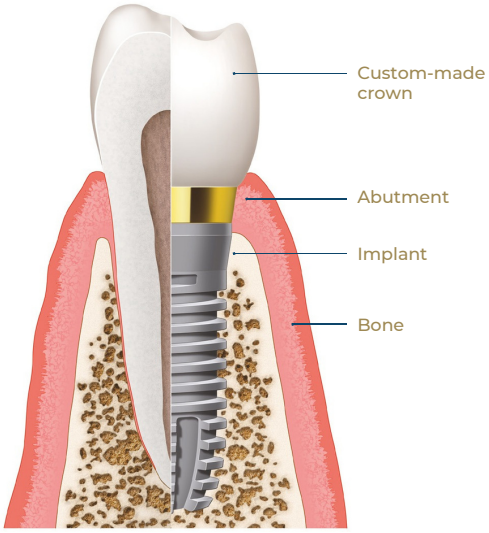


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INTRODUCTION

WHAT ARE DENTAL IMPLANTS?

Dental implants are used to replace a missing tooth or teeth. They are small metal screws (usually made of titanium, a titanium alloy or a ceramic like zirconia) that are placed into the jawbone to act like artificial tooth roots. Over time, they fuse to the jawbone and a restoration (false, yet natural-looking tooth) is fitted on top. Dental implants can be used to replace a single tooth or many teeth.



WILL IT HURT?

People are often surprised with how little discomfort is experienced during treatment. Just after the dental implants are placed in the mouth, any discomfort can usually be managed at home with normal painkillers. Some minor swelling occasionally occurs and is normal, this subsides within a few days after surgery.

HOW LONG WILL DENTAL IMPLANTS LAST?

Provided you look after your mouth, maintain good oral hygiene and see your dentist regularly, dental implants can last many years. Dental implant treatment is akin to having a hip replacement – you would expect the artificial hip to last 10-20 years and then it might need re-treating. Dental implants require a similar approach. It is important that you look after your dental implants for the very best, long-lasting results.

HOW MUCH DOES TREATMENT COST?

Costs for treatment will vary greatly depending on how many dental implants you need, what type of false tooth (or teeth) you choose and overall treatment time. As every case is different, your dentist will provide a treatment plan tailored specifically to you, which will include all the expected costs. Dental implants are usually more costly than other options to replace missing teeth, but they are also likely to last longer.

WHO IS SUITABLE?

Most adults with good dental and general health will be suitable for dental implants. However, every case is different so it's important to speak to your dentist.

HOW DO YOU KNOW IF YOU'RE SUITABLE?

All you need to do is visit your dentist and ask them about treatment. They will perform a thorough assessment of your mouth and discuss your treatment options with you. Planning for dental implants usually involves a three-dimensional (3D) X-ray called a CT or CBCT scan. This allows your dentist to choose the most suitable length, width and type of dental implant for you. If they do not personally offer dental implant treatment, they might refer you to a colleague.

WHO MIGHT NOT BE SUITABLE?

Young people whose mouths and jawbones are still growing are usually not suitable. Anyone who smokes or drinks heavily may also not be suitable for treatment. These habits increase the risk of problems with treatment so some dentists will wait until the behaviours are changed before placing dental implants. In addition, people who have gum disease may need to improve the health of their gums before dental implants could be considered. Those who are more susceptible to gum disease will be at a higher risk of developing problems, both in the short and long term.



MYTHS ABOUT DENTAL IMPLANTS

It's important that everyone has the correct information in order to decide whether dental implant treatment might be right for them. Here are a few myths that we would like to address...

MYTH 1
Dental implants last for life

This is not always the case. Indeed, if you look after your dental implants with good oral hygiene, and visit your dentist regularly, they should last many years. However, sometimes they do not last that long. It's akin to having a hip replacement – you would expect the artificial hip to last 10-20 years and then it might need re-treating. Dental implants require a similar approach. They are not a 'fit and forget' solution and require regular professional inspection and maintenance, as well as careful daily cleaning at home.

MYTH 2
You don't need to clean them

You definitely need to clean your dental implants regularly and with the right products. Good oral hygiene has a massive role to play in the short- and long-term success of your dental implants.

MYTH 3
It's a really painful procedure

As this is a surgical procedure, you should expect minor discomfort immediately after dental implant placement. The amount of discomfort experienced is related to the complexity and length of procedure. Most people have very little discomfort, while others can usually manage minor discomfort with normal painkillers at home. Modern dental techniques, products and technologies make the procedure quick, efficient and pain-free in many cases.

MYTH 4
Dental implants don't work

There is a lot of clinical research to show that dental implants work very well in most cases. Success rates are very good in the UK and can be as high as 95% – but it is vital that you follow your dental team's oral hygiene advice and that you attend all of your review appointments for professional cleaning and inspection in order to reduce the risk of problems.

MYTH 5
Dental implants are too expensive

Dental implants involve cutting-edge technologies and products, and professionals have to undergo extensive clinical training to offer this treatment. Therefore, the cost of dental implants reflects the complexity of the procedure and the skill of the dentist. The cost for a full mouth rehabilitation with dental implants is similar to that of a knee replacement done privately. Both these procedures will improve your health and quality of life for years to come. To make the treatment more affordable many practices offer payment plans to spread the cost of treatment.

MYTH 6
It's better to wait until the teeth get worse before getting dental implants

This is certainly not the case – you need a healthy mouth to achieve the best results with dental implants. The more problems you have with your teeth and gums, the longer it will take to improve the health of your mouth and the more expensive/complex the treatment will be. It is always
best to seek the advice of your dentist as soon as you see any problems to help minimise any further damage.

MYTH 7
Only old people need dental implants

Adults of all ages can and do get dental implants. A tooth or teeth can be lost for several reasons - sporting injury, accident, tumour etc. – regardless of whether they're in their 30s or 70s. The only limitation is that young people whose jaws are still growing may need to wait a few years before seeking treatment.



THE DENTAL IMPLANT PROCESS

Dental implants involve several treatment stages. Here is an outline of what you could expect:

1 **Assessment and treatment planning** – your dentist will perform a thorough assessment of your mouth and discuss all your treatment options with you. Once you have decided what would be best for you, your dentist will create a treatment plan that is tailored specifically to you, including expected timescale and costs.

2 **Implant placement** – dental implants are usually placed under local anaesthesia as this a relatively minor surgical procedure. Sedation may be available to anxious patients. During the procedure, your dentist will place the implant into the bone.

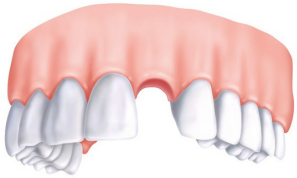
3 **Healing** – the time needed for healing will vary. Sometimes, the restoration (false tooth) can be fitted at the same time as the implant is placed. Other times, the gums and bone are left to heal for between six weeks and six months. In these cases, a temporary tooth may be provided, so you will not be left with a gap. During the treatment planning step your dentist will advise what's best for you.

4 **Restoration** – this involves attaching the false tooth (or teeth) to the dental implant. The restoration will have usually been made by a dental technician, specifically for your mouth.

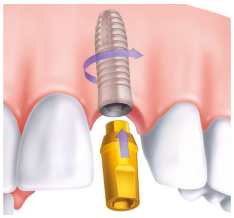
5 **Maintenance** – it is important that the dental implant and surrounding gums are kept clean. You will be given oral hygiene instructions and will need to visit the dentist and/or dental hygienist regularly in order to keep your dental implant(s) in good condition.

IMPLANT PROCESS

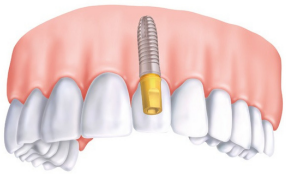
Missing tooth



Implant and abutment



Crown centred on abutment



ALTERNATIVE TREATMENTS

Dental implant treatment is a safe and effective option for many people with missing teeth. However, it is not appropriate for everyone. Alternative options include:

· **Dental bridges** – this is where the natural teeth at either side of a gap are trimmed down and a fixed bridge (with a false tooth, or teeth) is attached. An alternative is a Maryland Bridge, which uses small 'wings' that stick the false tooth to the teeth (or tooth) adjacent to the gap.

· **Apartial or complete removable denture** – either a few false teeth or a full arch of false teeth are attached to a plastic (acrylic) or metal (Cobalt Chrome) palate or connector. It needs to be removed for cleaning and at night.

· **Keeping the gap** – doing nothing is always an option. However, you should be aware that this could cause the jawbone to become thinner in that area over time, especially if a denture is worn, so future dental implants could require more complex procedures. The risks will vary depending on how many teeth are missing – speak to your dentist for more information.

DIFFERENT DENTAL IMPLANT PROCEDURES

There are various dental implant procedures available in the UK. The type of treatment you receive will depend on your individual situation.

STANDARD TREATMENT

Standard treatment involves the placing of a dental implant in the mouth followed by a healing period of between six weeks to six months before restoration (fitting of the false tooth). In some cases, this healing period is not needed and the restoration can be fitted at the same time as the dental implant is placed. This procedure can involve either one or two surgical procedures.

SAME DAY DENTAL IMPLANTS (OR 'SAME DAY TEETH')

This involves placing several dental implants across the jaw and then fixing a temporary bridge on the same day, which is left to integrate into the jaw for many months before a final bridge is constructed. This is not suitable for everyone, but offers a convenient solution for some people with no or very few natural teeth remaining.

TAKING CARE OF YOUR DENTAL IMPLANTS

Looking after your dental implants is essential for long-term successful results. You will receive detailed instructions from your dental team, but here are the essentials:

- Clean around the dental implants twice daily – just like your natural teeth
- Use products (brushes and interdental brushes/floss) that have been designed for use around dental implants where possible
- Clean your restoration (false tooth or teeth) twice daily, paying particular attention to the gumline. The restoration may need to be temporarily removed from the mouth by the dental team for professional cleaning in some cases
- Attend all dental appointments as recommended by your dentist
- Visit the dental hygienist for ongoing maintenance. Just as you would take your car to be serviced regularly to avoid future problems, servicing/maintaining your dental implants will have he same benefits.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WHAT IS A DENTAL IMPLANT?

A dental implant is a small metal screw – usually titanium – that is used to replace a missing tooth root. A false tooth (or implant restoration) is then fitted to the dental implant to complete the smile.

WHO IS SUITABLE FOR DENTAL IMPLANTS?

Most adults with good general and oral health are suitable for dental implants. Young people whose jaw is still growing are usually not suitable. Anyone who smokes or drinks heavily may also not be suitable. Everyone is different – your dentist will be able to provide more information tailored to you.

DO YOU NEED TO HAVE A HEALTHY MOUTH?

It is important to address any existing problems in the mouth before dental implants are placed, in order to maximise success of treatment. If you have bleeding gums, bad breath or loose teeth, your dentist will need to find and treat the cause of the problem first.

AM I ALLOWED TO GET A SECOND OPINION?

Absolutely! You are always entitled to seek a second opinion to make sure you know about all the options available to you.

HOW MUCH WILL IT COST?

Costs of dental implants vary depending on how complex the treatment is. Your professional dental team will provide a full breakdown of costs as part of the planning stage of treatment. Most dental practices will offer payment plans to make treatment more affordable.

WILL IT HURT?

People are often surprised with how little discomfort is experienced during treatment. Just after the dental implants are placed in the mouth, any minor discomfort can usually be managed at home with normal painkillers. Some minor swelling is normal, which should subside within a few days after surgery.

HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE IN THE CHAIR?

A single dental implant can be placed in the mouth during one appointment of just 30 minutes. Where more dental implants are being placed, the appointment may be a few hours long. In some situations, a second surgical appointment may be needed.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE BEFORE I GET MY NEW TOOTH?

In some cases, the restoration (false tooth) can be fitted during the same appointment that the dental implant is placed. In other cases, time is needed for the mouth to heal before a restoration is fitted – this can be anything from two days to six months. Your dentist will let you know what you'll require during the planning of your treatment.

HOW LONG WILL THE IMPLANTS LAST AND HOW DO I LOOK AFTER THEM?

Dental implants can last a long time if they are looked after properly. That involves cleaning around the dental implant and restoration (false tooth) twice daily with the correct products and attending regular appointments with your dentist and/or dental hygienist. Your dental team will provide specific advice tailored to you to help maintain the health of your mouth and your implants for years to come.

WHY IS IT SO EXPENSIVE?

Dental implant treatment is a cutting-edge procedure. It requires further training and extensive skill by the dentist in order to place dental implants safely and effectively. It also involves the use of advanced products and technologies. Most dental practices will offer payment plans to make treatment more affordable.

SHOULD I CONSIDER GOING ABROAD FOR TREATMENT?

Some people are tempted to have dental treatment abroad because the price is often lower. However, the quality of the products used is not always of the same standard as those used in the UK, because other countries might not regulate the industry as closely as we do here. Similarly, ongoing maintenance is really important for successful dental implant treatment. This can be difficult to obtain if you have had the surgery in a different country.

WHAT IS PERI-IMPLANTITIS?

This is an infection of the tissue around a dental implant, which causes loss of the bone surrounding the dental implant. If left untreated, it could cause serious problems and eventually lead to failure of the dental implant – which could need to be removed. The infection is most often caused by poor oral hygiene, so it's essential to keep your dental implant clean and attend all your dental appointments.

MY FRIEND'S IMPLANTS COST A LOT LESS – WHY IS MY DENTIST CHARGING ME SO MUCH MORE?

There are many reasons why the price of dental implant treatment could vary between patients. These include the number of dental implants required, the brand of products used, the overall treatment time, the skill/experience of the dentist and the type of aftercare offered. Very rarely will two people have the same treatment so it is difficult to compare prices.

WHAT CAN GO WRONG?

As with all surgical procedures, there are risks to be aware of when considering dental implants. The most common problem is infection (peri-implantitis) that can affect the gums and the jawbone, but it is also possible for the dental implant to not fuse with the jawbone properly. Your dentist will plan treatment to minimise the risks. It is also important that you look after your implants with good oral hygiene.

CAN I GET IMPLANTS ON THE NHS?

Dental implants are only available on the NHS if someone is physically unable to wear a denture. This might be due to an injury or tumour on the face or in the mouth, or an accident that knocked a tooth out. Otherwise, treatment is provided on a private basis.

WHAT IS BONE GRAFTING?

This procedure involves building up the bone for a dental implant to be placed. It may be required in patients who have very thin or narrow jaw bones. Your dentist will be able to provide more details of what the process will involve for you.

WHAT ARE 'TEETH IN A DAY'?

This is a procedure whereby four to six dental implants and a full arch of false teeth are placed in a single appointment. It's ideal for people who have no or very few natural teeth. However, treatment is not appropriate for everyone and you'll need to speak to your dentist to see if you would be suitable.



As treatment does vary so much between patients,
we recommend you speak to a dentist.