

Reconstructing Your Smile With Dental Implants

What are Dental Implants?

A dental implant is a replacement of the root of a tooth or teeth. Unlike the root of a tooth, the titanium implant fuses with and becomes anchored to the bone in a process called osseointegration. Titanium is the material of choice because it is accepted by the body and is osteophilic (bone-loving). The integration of the implant into the bone is caused by the fusion of living bone cells to an oxide layer on the surface of the titanium.

The Implant Procedure

The dentist will take x-rays and make models of your mouth in order to create a correctly placed implant. Once the placement has been determined, the implant will be surgically placed by an oral surgeon usually with the use of local anesthetic. The surgery is minimally invasive and does not leave an open wound, leaving the post-operation discomfort minimal. Once the implant is in place, it needs to be left to heal for 2-6 months, the time required for the titanium to fuse with the bone. Once the implant has been fully integrated with the bone, crown will be made to exactly replace the tooth that was previously there.

Types of Implants

Today there are a variety of implants available, each having their own purpose and use:

- **Single tooth replacement:** consist of one implant and one crown to replace one tooth
- **Multiple tooth replacement:** can replace multiple teeth with either a 3-unit bridge supported by two implants or multiple implants supporting a larger number of teeth. An entire arch can be replaced with 4-8 implants
- **Combinations of fixed and removable bridgework:** a combination of fixed implants which is attached to a removable section
- **Over Dentures:** dentures supported by implants. Normal dentures lay directly on the gum and press on the bone causing bone loss. The over dentures are non-removable, protect the bone and are now considered the standard for those who have lost all their teeth
- **Anchorage for tooth movement:** provide stable, non moveable support for movement of other teeth in orthodontics
- **Temporary bridgework:** place temporary macro-mini implants which are later removed when the permanent implants are healed and the permanent crowns in place. With this procedure, the patient never has to go without teeth, therefore is more socially comfortable and aesthetically pleasing

Talk to your dentist to create the best treatment procedure.

To find out more, consult Dr. Dautel or your hygienist at your next appointment.