

**Nothing can take the place of natural teeth, but dental implants can come close.** Implants are an increasingly popular and effective option to replace missing teeth.

A missing tooth is a serious matter. Teeth are made to work together. When you lose a tooth, the nearby teeth may tilt or drift into the empty space. The teeth in the opposite jaw may also shift up or down toward the space. This can affect your bite and place more stress on your teeth and jaw joints.

Teeth that have tipped or drifted are also harder to clean. This puts them at a higher risk for tooth decay and gum disease.

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# Considering Dental Implants?

## What you should know

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Dental Treatment

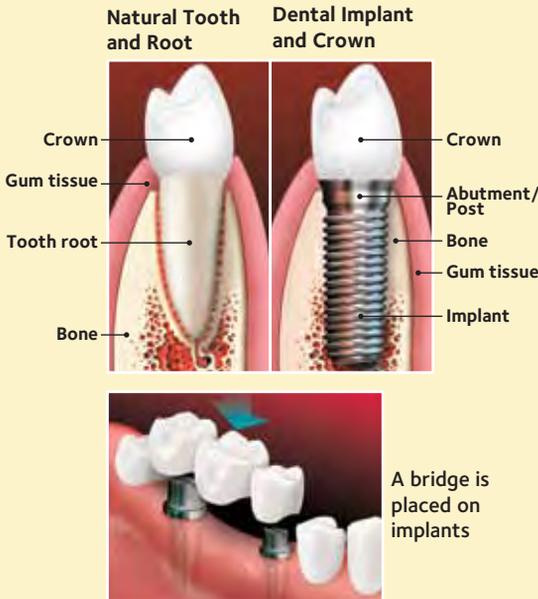


## What are implants?

Implants are posts surgically placed in the upper or lower jaw. The implants become a stable base for one or more replacement teeth. They function as anchors that replace your natural tooth roots. Implants are made of titanium and other materials that are compatible with the human body.

Patients may choose dental implants to replace a single tooth, several teeth or to support partial or full dentures. **Here are some of the main reasons people get implants:**

- They help you chew better.
- They can help fill out a face that could look “sunken” because of missing teeth.
- Dental implants can prevent further bone loss in the jaw.
- They are the closest thing to natural teeth.



## How are implants placed?

The way implants are placed depends on the patient, the type of implant, and the tooth being replaced. Treatment can take only one day, or it can take several months, or somewhere in between. Your dentist can outline a treatment plan that is most likely to be successful for you.

There are three general phases of implant treatment:

- **Implant placement:** The dentist surgically places the implant into the jaw. There may be some swelling and/or pain after the surgery, so your dentist may give you pain medication. Your dentist may also suggest you stick to soft foods while the area heals.
- **Healing:** The implant attaches to the bone through a process called osseointegration, which means “combines with the bone.” Some patients might need to wait until the implant is completely integrated, up to several months, before replacement teeth can be attached to the implant. Others may have their implants and replacement teeth placed all in one visit.
- **Replacing your missing teeth:** If you are getting a single implant, the dentist will custom make a new tooth for you, called a crown. Implant-supported bridges or dentures are also made to fit your mouth and your implants. Once completed, the man-made teeth are attached to the implant posts. The prosthesis usually takes some time to make. Your dentist may give you a temporary crown, bridge or denture in the meantime.

## Who’s a good candidate?

If you’re in good health, don’t smoke, and have enough bone to support it, you are a good candidate for an implant. Even if you have some bone loss, you may get an implant. Sometimes bone may need to be added to your jaw by a special process known as bone grafting. You must also be ready to commit to an oral care routine and to visit your dentist regularly.

It’s a good idea to discuss implant treatment carefully with your dental team. The treatment time for dental implants can be longer and the cost higher than that of other procedures. Ask your dentist if implants are right for you.