

# Dental Implants: What To Expect

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From entering your dentist's office to walking out with a new smile, knowing the stages of dental implants will ease your transition.

There are four main stages, and they are explained below.

## **Examination and Diagnosis**

Six months before scheduling your dental implant surgery, a team of professionals will create your individualized treatment plan. This plan focuses on your specific needs and includes x-rays of your head, jaw, and teeth. Impressions, or molds, are taken of your teeth and jaw so your dentist will know where to place your implants. Other tests to check general health, including lung and heart function, are conducted to ensure you are ready for surgery.

Benefits of digital x-rays include:

- 90% less radiation exposure
- No waiting times
- Clear images that can be immediately enhanced

Surgery for dental implants is divided into two stages. The second stage is not required for all implant types.

## **Stage 1 Surgery**

If your surgery occurs in an office setting, you will receive a local anesthetic. A mild sedative may also be administered. If your surgery takes place in the hospital, your doctor may put you under general anesthesia. On the day of your surgery, a tooth root implant, which is a post made of titanium, will be inserted into your jaw bone. Some swelling and pain may occur, and your gums may become discolored.

After four to five days, the swelling and pain should lessen significantly.

Seven days after surgery, your old dentures will be fitted with a soft lining for continual use and placed back in your mouth. At this time, you can return to work and other everyday activities.

10 to 14 days after surgery, your stitches should have dissolved or been removed.

Four to six weeks after surgery, a soft diet free from solid foods is needed.

Following this diet will significantly increase your chances of successful dental implants.

Three to six months after surgery, you should be completely healed.

## **Osseointegration**

When dental implants are successful, the jawbone will connect to your implant's metal or ceramic section and grow around it. This natural process will provide a stable foundation for chewing, talking, and any other activity you want to do.

## **Stage 2 Surgery**

This surgery occurs three to six months after your implants have been inserted, usually on an outpatient basis.

After numbing your gums with a local anesthetic, the surgeon will open the gum tissue above your implants and attach extension posts, called abutments. Your new teeth will be attached to these abutments at a later date.

The fit of your implants will be rechecked to verify firmness and integration with the bone. When this check passes, your gums will be arranged around the abutments and stitched closed.

Protective caps are screwed onto the abutments. Either a surgical packing or your old dentures will be used to help your gums heal. A soft lining comes with your old dentures to support the process.

Stitches placed in this surgery should dissolve or be removed within 10 to 14 days.

A final x-ray will be conducted to confirm successful osseointegration. Your dentist will ensure the abutments are securely and accurately attached to the implants during this process.

Depending on your needs, either one or more replacement teeth will be attached to the abutment, or a removable denture will be attached.

## **Dental Implants and Your Surrounding Teeth**

Dental implants are the best option to preserve adjacent teeth. After losing a tooth, the gums deteriorate and neighboring teeth begin to drift into the space. This movement can cause difficulties with tooth alignment and other functions. Because dental implants replace the root, they preserve the alignment of the teeth.

Utilizing a bridge for missing teeth requires healthy teeth to be cut down.

This procedure may lead to a great deal of tooth decay because of exposed dentin.

Avoid these complications by discussing the option of dental implants with your dentist.

## **Bibliography**

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