

# Dental Implants

Dental implants are a solution to replace missing teeth. Implants can be stand-alone fixtures or may be attached to each other (implant bridge), or even connect to a full or partial denture. Implant design can vary depending on the number of areas or location in the mouth where the tooth loss has occurred. Replacing missing teeth can improve an individual's quality of life by restoring function for speaking and eating, maintaining aesthetics, as well as build confidence to smile.

Getting dental implants is a multi-phase process, so note it will take several visits before the process is complete. Committing to ongoing maintenance is key to the success of dental implants.

## TREATMENT DETAILS

Dental implants consist of two components: a screw-like post made of specialized metal inserted into the upper or lower jawbone through a surgical technique; and a crown designed to connect with the post. The post replaces the area where the root of the tooth existed. A temporary cap is placed on the implant after it is inserted and remains there until it is time to place the permanent crown. The crown is made to aesthetically resemble the natural tooth. For some clients, a graft is necessary prior to the implant being placed into the bone to provide structural support.

## PRE-IMPLANT RISK FACTORS

It is imperative an individual undergoing dental implant surgery refrain from smoking or vaping during multi-phase process. Generally, the long-term cessation of these habits will aid in the success of the implant as well as promote oral health.

Those with poor oral hygiene or untreated or active periodontitis (commonly referred to as gum disease) may require preventive oral healthcare prior to placement of an implant.

Those with uncontrolled diabetes, cancer, or other immunological conditions may not be candidates for implant treatments or could be more at risk for complications and/or treatment failure. Consultation with your oral healthcare team is advised.



## POST-IMPLANT RISK FACTORS

Although dental implants are not made of tooth material, they must be taken care of properly just as natural teeth to prevent problems and promote a healthy mouth and body.

If an implant seems loose, there is pain, swelling, a bad taste, a bad smell, bleeding, or pus in the area of the implant, it is important to contact an oral health professional immediately and follow any directions provided.

Regular oral health examinations and professional dental hygiene care is essential to ensure the implant is maintained. A dental hygienist can suggest an appropriate professional cleaning interval to promote the longevity of an implant.

## AT HOME CARE

Dental Good home care is needed to prevent food debris and plaque bacteria from collecting between the implant and the gum tissue which may lead to inflammation and infection.

A dental hygienist can provide custom oral care tips and show you the best home care options. Examples of home care strategies for those with implants may include:

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- Tooth brushing – Power (electric) or manual toothbrushes with soft bristles.
- Flossing – Handle-type flossers may not fully access the area around an implant, so traditional floss may be necessary, or in the case of a bridge, floss threaders to properly clean.
- Interdental tooth brushing –End tuft brushes containing no wire components to help reach intricate areas.
- Oral rinsing – Typically an alcohol-free mouthrinse is best.
- Nighttime – The use of a nightguard may be advised to protect an implant from pressures or damage attributed by clenching or grinding teeth.
- Diet – The dental implant requires similar care to natural teeth to keep the structure intact. Although a dental implant cannot decay in the same way as tooth enamel, acidic foods and beverages can cause chemical erosion of the metal. Avoiding hard foods can help prevent fractures.
- Habits – Nail biting or using the teeth as a tool (i.e., to hold objects) should be avoided to prevent damaging the teeth.

## ONGOING MAINTENANCE

- Safety during sports – The use of a mouthguard is advised especially for contact sports to prevent damage or injury to an implant and all teeth at any age.

*As professional health-care providers, dental hygienists are primarily concerned with promoting good oral health. Dental hygiene is among the largest of the regulated healthcare professions in the province. In Ontario all dental hygienists are registered with the College of Dental Hygienists of Ontario, which regulates the profession to ensure the public receives safe and ongoing comprehensive oral care.*