

Dental Implant FAQ's - in accordance with the Australian Dental Association Inc. (ADA)

Q. What is an implant?

A. An implant is an artificial tooth root that is submerged into the jawbone. When dental work such as a crown, fixed bridge or a full set of dentures is added, one or more missing teeth can be replaced. A dental implant is fabricated from a very strong, biocompatible material placed in a simple procedure that, generally, is as convenient as a tooth extraction. After an initial healing period, during which the implant is buried in bone and left undisturbed under gum tissue, it is uncovered and connected to a small metal post that secures and supports the artificial tooth.

The implant material is extremely biocompatible. The bone grows to the implant and bonds to it. This makes the implant very strong. The process is called 'osseointegration'.

Q. Am I suitable for an implant?

A. Some people may not be suitable for this procedure. Conditions such as alcoholism, some psychiatric disorders and uncontrolled diabetes can cause problems. Your dentist will also need to check to see how much bone you have and whether there is enough space for an implant. The adjacent teeth roots will also need to be away from the implant. If you don't have enough bone, it is possible to grow bone or even graft bone from elsewhere in the mouth or places like your hip.

Q. How long does the procedure take?

A. Depending on the type of bone, and where the implant is placed into your jaw, it can range from a few months to over 9 months. Generally, implants in the front lower jaw need around 4 months; the back upper jaw needs around 9 months and elsewhere in the mouth around 6 months. These times may need to be lengthened if bone needs to be grown or grafting has taken place. Your dentist can advise you of the projected time line and healing process.

Q. How long will an implant last?

A. This is impossible to predict, although research has demonstrated a long life once the implants have been integrated with bone, each patient is different, and longevity may be affected by overall health, nutrition, oral hygiene and tobacco usage. Individual anatomy, the design and construction of the prosthesis and oral habits may also have an influence.

Q. How much do implants cost?

A. In general, costs are closely comparable to those of other prostheses involving fixed bridgework. The uniqueness of each patient's restorative needs means this should be discussed with your dentist.