

INFORMATION SHEET ON DENTAL IMPLANTS



When you are missing a tooth, there are a variety of ways to restore your looks and function. This information is presented to you so that you can be better informed about your healthcare decisions.

Missing teeth can be replaced in several ways:

- **Partial Denture** (\$) – This is a prosthetic that you must take in and out daily (kind of like a retainer with a fake tooth attached to it). It is the least expensive option, and ideal for short-term use (< 1 year), but some styles with metal frameworks can be used for decades.
- **Fixed Denture** (“bridge”, \$\$) – fake teeth are permanently cemented onto the teeth next to the space. However, a bridge is much more invasive to the adjacent teeth than an implant. And because it is difficult to clean, these typically need replacement every 10-20 years.
- **Dental Implant** (\$\$\$) – considered the best long-term option. This is a stand-alone tooth that should last a lifetime.

So, what exactly is an implant?

A dental implant is a titanium pin that is placed where your tooth used to be. It cannot get a cavity, and is as close to the look and function of a natural tooth that modern dentistry can provide. When we say “implant”, what we really mean is the “implant system”, which is composed of these three parts:

- **Implant** – this is the actual titanium screw, sized for your specific needs, that is placed where a tooth used to be.
- **Abutment** – this is the internal portion that bolts to the implant, comes up through the gums, and provides the surface for the crown to be attached.
- **Crown** – this is the final part, and is what makes it look like a tooth. The crown is ceramic and designed to have the shape and color of a natural tooth.



What are the down sides about an implant?

- **Time** – If a tooth was extracted today, it takes about 3-4 months before the bone is ready for the implant to be placed. Then, once the implant is placed, it is another 3-4 months until the implant is ready to support a crown. In the meantime, a snap-in temporary tooth is sometimes used for esthetic purposes. But for back teeth, the preference is to leave the space unfilled during this phase.
- **Cost** – Dental implant treatment can be \$4,000-\$6,000+ (without insurance). The implant itself is only 1/4 of that price. The rest of the cost is related to the other components and steps. But because of the time between steps, the overall cost can be spread out more evenly over time.

There are other factors not discussed here. This is only a preliminary information sheet that does not consider any of the variables that make you unique. Be sure to discuss any questions you may have about your situation with your doctor.