

Dental Implants

What are dental implants?

Dental implants are a fairly modern advancement in dentistry, allowing a missing tooth to be replaced with a similar artificial tooth. The implant itself replaces the root of the original tooth, allowing for the placement of a crown or other restoration with stability and function similar to the natural tooth that was replaced.

What are the benefits of dental implants?

Ordinarily, when a tooth is extracted or lost, you will continue to lose bone in that area over the course of your life. This can result in loss of lip support that make you look older, but also in loss of bone strength. However, the titanium posts of dental implants bond well with the jaw bone and help stimulate growth of the surrounding bone structure, preserving your bone.

A dental implant in place of a missing tooth can prevent the surrounding teeth from shifting and tipping into the tooth loss site, resulting in bite issues or other problems.

Dental implants can be used alone or in combination with other restorations such as a fixed bridge, fixed or removable full denture and removable partial denture, allowing for much better bite strength than would be had without them.

Who are dental implants for?

Dental implants can be used for those who are missing only a single tooth or used in combination with other restorations to give back the smiles of those who are missing many or all of their teeth.

Missing teeth can cause a range of problems, from self-esteem issues to difficulties with eating and speaking, so if you're one of those people with tooth loss, ask Dr. Orr or Dr. Wilson if dental implants may be right for you.

Immediate implant placement (after an extraction)

When you have a tooth that is broken off or cannot be saved/repared with a root canal and crown, you sometimes have no choice but to remove the tooth. When you make the decision to remove a hopeless tooth, that is a good time to plan how you will replace the tooth. Not replacing a tooth that is missing puts extra pressure on the remaining teeth, and increases the likelihood that additional teeth may be lost in the future.

When a tooth is to be removed, providing there is no active infection around the tooth and you have adequate bone left around the tooth, you can have a dental implant (an artificial titanium tooth root) placed on the same day as the extraction. That can save you up to four months of time before the implant-supported crown can go in (you have your tooth back again that much sooner!)

If you remove the tooth and don't have the implant placed, a bone graft is placed to fill in the missing bone and preserve it so you can have the implant placed. The bone graft takes about 4 months to become strong enough to accept the implant, so you have to wait an extra 4 months before you can have your implant placed.

If the implant can be placed on the same day of the extraction, then typically a bone graft is placed around the implant to fill in any space between the implant and the bone. PRP, Platelet-Rich Plasma, is mixed in with the bone graft and placed as a layer over top of the implant, which speeds up healing and dramatically reduces pain. Then you only have to wait the typical amount of time for the implant to fuse to the bone before the implant crown is placed—6 months for the lower and 12 months for the upper.