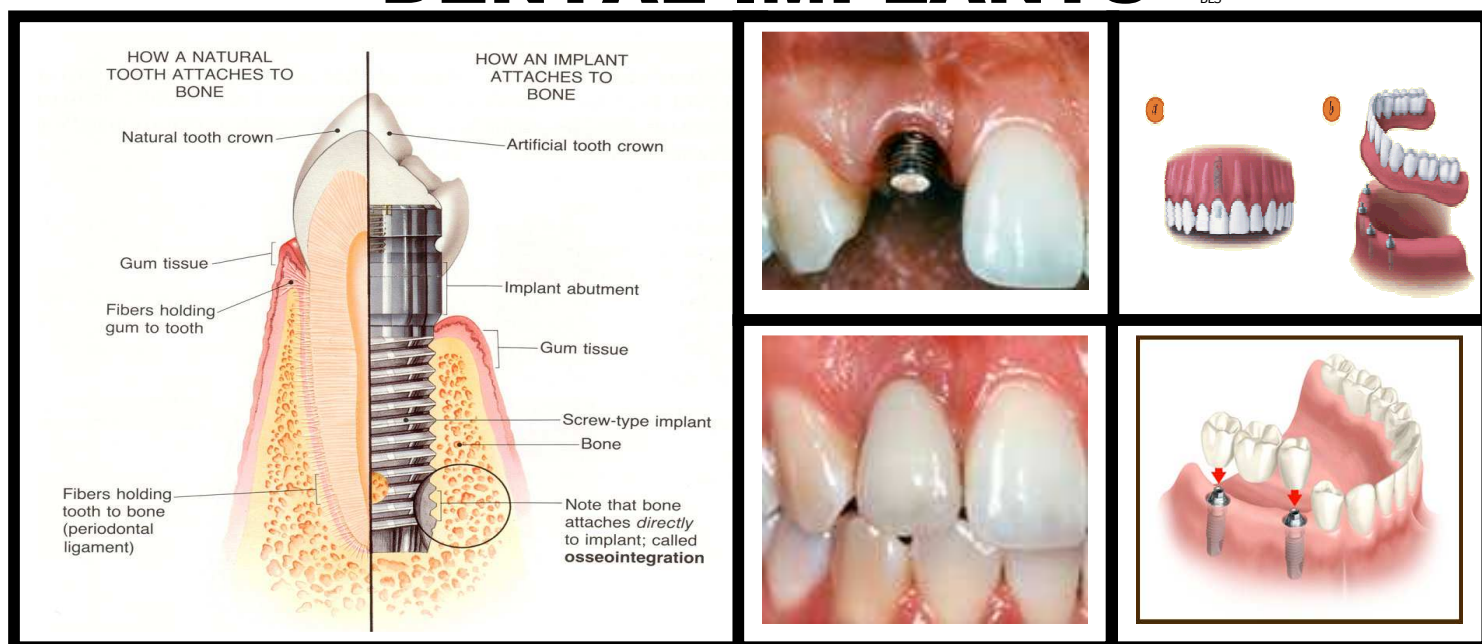


# DENTAL IMPLANTS

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## What is a Dental Implant?

A Dental implant is an artificial tooth replacement used to counter tooth loss which offers an attractive and reliable way to restore incomplete smiles. Dental implants are so natural-looking and feel just like your own teeth that you may forget you ever lost a tooth.

Most dental plans will cover implant services at 50% up to your remaining maximum for ALL implant services, implant crown ONLY, or have NO implant coverage. We recommend you request the dentist to send a pre-treatment estimate for coverage before treatment is started or you can contact your plan sponsor (often your employer) or the dental insurance to explain the designed features of your specific dental plan regarding implant services (Codes= Endosteal Implant is D6010, Implant Abutment is D6056, and Implant Crown is D6059). Please be aware that an Implant, Implant abutment, Implant denture, Implant bridge, and an implant crown are considered separate procedures and each has its own service charge.

## Tooth Loss

People who have lost teeth might feel too self-conscious to smile or talk. Edentulism, or tooth loss, can create several problems. Your nutrition may suffer, as foods you once enjoyed become too hard to chew. Additionally, biting irregularities caused by tooth loss can have a negative effect on eating habits and this can lead to secondary health problems like malnutrition. Your remaining teeth may suffer, as they do the work of the missing teeth and end up strained and possibly damaged themselves. Your jawbone may suffer, as the absence of teeth can cause it to weaken or shrink which is referred to as resorption. And, of course, your smile may suffer too. Teeth are lost because of tooth decay, root canal failure, excessive wear and tear, congenital defects, gum disease (periodontitis), or trauma to the mouth.

## Advantages of Implant Dentistry

Implants offer a permanent solution to tooth loss. In many cases, dental implants may be the only logical choice for the restoration of all necessary functionality of the teeth and supporting structures. There are a number of restorative options for the treatment of missing teeth. When comparing the benefits of implants against other alternatives they are the ideal way of filling gaps and are also cost effective in the long run although there are cheaper alternatives available. A dental implant provides several advantages over other tooth replacement options. In addition to looking and functioning like a natural tooth, a dental implant replaces a single tooth without sacrificing the health of neighboring teeth. The other common treatment for the loss of a single tooth, a tooth-supported fixed bridge, requires that adjacent teeth be ground down to support the cemented bridge. Dental implants are stronger and more comfortable than their restorative counterparts (bridges and dentures).

## Success Rates of Dental Implants

Dental implants are among the most successful procedures in dentistry. There is no guarantee that an implant procedure will be successful, but studies have shown a five-year success rate of 95% for lower jaw implants and 90% for upper jaw implants. The success rate for upper jaw implants is slightly lower because the upper jaw is less dense than the lower jaw, making successful implantation and osseointegration potentially more difficult to achieve. If you are a smoker who is considering a dental implant, your dentist will likely advise you to give up smoking before undergoing the process because smokers face a higher risk of implant failure.

## The Dental Implant Procedure

Dental implants, which look like screws or cylinders, are virtually indistinguishable from other teeth. This appearance is aided in part by the structural and functional connection between the dental implant and the living bone. Implants are typically placed in a single sitting but require a period of osseointegration. Osseointegration is the process by which direct anchorage of a dental implant root and the bone of the jaw occurs. Implants take anywhere from three to six months to anchor and heal. In most cases, you will return for monthly visits to check the healing progress. Please be aware that the implant will fail if osseointegration does not occur.

Often, a second step of the procedure is necessary to uncover the implants and attach extensions. These small metal posts are called abutments which complete the foundation on which your new teeth will be placed. This visit is normally around 3 months after the implant is installed. Various connecting devices may be added to allow multiple crowns to attach to the implants depending upon the number of implants placed. A connecting device may be made that will hold your new teeth that can be tightened down on the implant or it may be a clipped to a bar or a round ball anchor to which a bridge or denture snaps on and off. Your gums will be allowed to heal for a couple of weeks following this procedure. There are some implant systems (one-stage) that do not require this second step. These systems use an implant which already has the extension piece attached. Your dentist or periodontist will advise you on which system is best for you.

Finally, the implant crown, bridge, or denture will be created for you and attached to the abutments or other device explained in the second step. In most cases, you will normally return in 1 to 3 months from the second step procedure to start this final implant procedure. After a short time, you will experience a restored confidence in your smile.