

Implant Procedure

How are dental implants placed?

Most dental implant surgery procedures are performed in the dentist's practice and occasionally in a hospital setting. Local anaesthesia is usually adequate but various other forms of patient sedation (such as nitrous oxide, and oral/or intravenous sedation) may also be used.

Adjunctive surgical procedures, such as bone augmentation, may be performed as separate procedures or at the same time as implant placement. Each surgical procedure is different depending on the clinical situation as well as the preferences of the patient and dental surgeon. Your case will be planned, assessed and discussed with you in intricate detail and we encourage you to ask any questions to inform yourself as much as possible before the procedure. Whilst we plan for all eventualities, sometimes during the procedure we may need to change the length or diameter of the implant, and we will always act in your best interests to get you the best result possible.

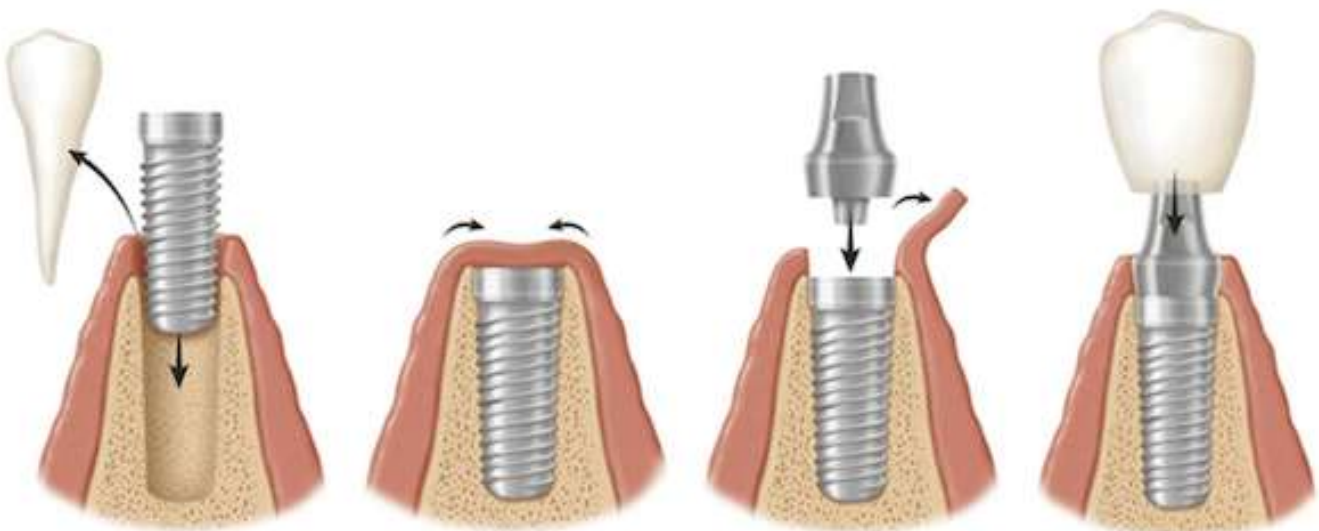
Why is the surgical procedure a three-step process?

The most widely practiced method of placing dental implants is a "staged surgery" procedure. The first stage consists of surgically burying the implant (which replaces the tooth root) flush with the bone but underneath the gum. This protects the implant from force while it is healing. At the end of this healing period, the implant needs to be exposed by removing some of the overlying gum. This is usually done around 3-5months after placing the implant.

At this second stage, the surgeon checks the implant for its successful integration and connects some form of post which penetrates through the gum into the mouth. This post is called the abutment. The gum is allowed to heal around the abutment and form a cuff or collar of healthy gum around the implant. After about 1-2months, when the gum appears healthy, the final crown can be placed onto the abutment. It is usually cemented onto the abutment (which is screwed onto the implant).

Research has shown that it is often possible to place a suitable abutment at the same time as the implant. This has certain limitations but can eliminate the need for a second surgery to expose the implant. However, the implant still requires adequate healing time for the bone to fuse to the implant.

When placing implants, we will sometimes use a drill to form the implant site, or use instruments called osteotomes to shape the bone to allow the implant to have a socket to be seated into. All of it is painless, with local anaesthesia, but with the osteotomes you may feel the "tapping". Your dentist will explain this to you.



What is the overall success rate for dental implants?

Despite decades of clinical and scientific research, dental implants do not have a 100% success rate. However, the success rates have improved dramatically since the introduction of dental implant surgery and the dental profession can proudly report success rates well above 90% for most implant patients. Similarly, long-term success rates are in the high 90% range and are likewise improving. When a dental implant has not successfully integrated, it may need to be removed, as it cannot easily be "converted" to osseointegrate. Your dentist will give you best advice about this. A replacement implant can be placed but it may require some months of healing time and possibly bone augmentation (repair by means of grafting).

How to Prepare for your Procedure

You're likely to have some X-rays done so that your dentist can check the shape and thickness of your jawbone. These will also show the position of other structures in your mouth, such as your nerves. It's possible that you may need to have a CT scan if the X-rays don't provide enough information.

It is always advisable to eat something before treatment to keep your blood sugar levels high, and so that you can avoid eating anything for 2-3hrs after the implant has been placed.

Dental implant surgery is usually done under local anaesthesia or IV sedation. This completely blocks pain from your mouth and you will stay awake during the procedure. You may have a sedative – this relieves anxiety and helps you to relax. It's rare, but you may need to go into hospital and have treatment under general anaesthesia. This means you will be asleep during the operation.

Your dentist will discuss with you what will happen before, during and after your procedure, and any pain you might have. This is your opportunity to understand what will happen, and you can help yourself by preparing questions to ask about the risks, benefits and any alternatives to the procedure. This will help you to be informed, so you can give your consent for the procedure to go ahead, which you may be asked to do by signing a consent form.

Side-effects

Side-effects are the unwanted but mostly temporary effects you may get after having the procedure.

You may have some swelling and discomfort around the implant area. If so, you can take an over-the-counter painkiller such as paracetamol or ibuprofen. Always read the patient information leaflet that comes with your medicine and if you have any questions, ask your pharmacist for advice.

Risks and Complications

Complications are when problems occur during or after the procedure. The possible complications of any operation include an unexpected reaction to the anaesthetic, or excessive bleeding. This is why your dentist will assess your entire medical history, discuss with you previous times you have had anaesthetics/sedation, and a detailed assessment of your medications. Where necessary, we will contact your GP about your medical history so that your implant surgery goes very smoothly.

The nerve that runs to your face has branches that are in your lower jaw. These supply the feeling to your lower jaw, lower teeth and gums and your bottom lip. If the nerves are damaged by the implant, you may feel temporary or sometimes permanent tingling or numbness. We will always arrange for CT to see the position of the nerves in your jawbone to virtually eliminate this risk.

Sometimes, we plan an implant, but when we begin the procedure and look at the bone, we realise that there is insufficient bone to place the implant, and we may need to bone graft, and delay the implant procedure to allow for the bone graft to "take".

Occasionally, the jawbone doesn't fuse with the implant properly and the implant can become loose. This isn't usually painful, but the implant won't be able to support false teeth. You may need to have another implant fitted. If an implant fails to fuse properly, we would offer this at no cost to you.

Benefits

A dental implant is the closest replacement, in terms, of features, advantages and benefits to a natural tooth. It has its own root (anchor) and the crown is designed to beautifully replicate the appearance and function of a natural tooth. Many patients who have implants placed often say they wish that they had made the decision to have them placed much sooner, and that their ability to speak, enjoy a meal and smile, has changed the quality of their life. If implants are kept clean and looked after, they can last as long as a natural tooth, often this can mean lifelong. For a replacement to a natural tooth, they actually provide excellent value for money in the long-term.

Cost

This can vary from case to case, but can start from £1500. Discuss this with your dentist, but when it comes to your health, it should be looked at as an investment, rather than a cost.

If you look after your body, it will indeed look after you...