

Reconstruction with Implants

Oral reconstruction using implants is a popular treatment method with a high long-term success rate, now an inseparable part of modern dentistry. The implants improve function, oral aesthetic and quality of life. With no need to sand down healthy teeth and no more shifting dentures in your mouth- with implants you'll now have crowns and bridges or stable and comfortable dentures.

What is a dental implant?

The implant is made out of a small, screw-like metal frame which is inserted into the jawbone to serve as a replacement to the root of the tooth. After a 4 to 6 month long wait meant to allow the body time to accept the implant, a special construction is mounted on the artificial “root” that will support dentures or serve as a base for a crown or a bridge. The implant is made out of titanium- a strong metal which is a biological fit to the bone tissues and the gums, and is resilient to the forces at play in the oral cavity. The titanium implants are integrated into the jaw while maintaining direct contact with the bone (Osseointegration).

The conditions for a successful implant

1. Good health.
2. A jawbone of the correct structure and size for implants.
3. Healthy gums.
4. Good oral hygiene habits.

Possible complications

After getting a dental implant you might expect the usual side-effects typical to surgical procedures like pain, swelling, bleeding, bruises, discomfort, fever etc. In unusual and rare cases, complications like an implant protruding into the sinus, thus hurting the nerves in the jaw or the blood vessels in it, might occur.

The success rate of implants is usually high, between 90% to 95%, but there are cases where treatment fails for various and sometimes unexplained reasons. It might be evident right away, after a few months or even after prosthetic rehabilitation. When a dental implant fails it means there was no fusion between the bone and the implant, or that the initial fusion didn't hold due to bone mass reduction. Both are signs that the implant must be removed. In such cases, another attempt at implants might be done once again in three months. **Unfortunately, we cannot guarantee success in every single case of reconstruction with implants despite our efforts to do the procedure using the best methods, previously proved to be successful.** Success depends on many variables, some still unknown. It also depends on the surgical method, the surgeon and the rehabilitation specialist, on the materials used and on the patient himself (mostly his age, health and smoking habits). Smoking reduces the chances for success since it slows down bone healing.

When shouldn't you do implants?

1. If you don't have enough bone to sustain implants due to osteoporosis.
2. If you suffer from chronic diseases like diabetes, certain heart conditions, bone diseases etc.
3. If you have bad oral hygiene habits.

Treatment stages:

Examination- the patient fills out a general health questionnaire and a thorough check of the oral cavity tissue and X-rays are done by the prosthodontist. If the condition allows for dental implants, a treatment plan is designed, and the patient is referred to a surgeon for another examination and to get the implants done.

The implant process- usually performed by a surgeon. The process isn't complicated, typically done under local anesthetics. The surgeon reveals the jawbone and drills a space into which the implant is inserted. Then the area is covered back up by gum tissue. The procedure is short (30-90 minutes depending in the number of implants), gentle, usually not even painful.

Implant acceptance- a stage which lasts between 4 to 6 months. In this stage bone grows around the implant, anchoring it to the jawbone. During this period, the patient will receive temporary dentures. **In the first two weeks after the procedure you mustn't use dentures!**

Exposure stage- under local anesthetic, the surgeon will reveal the head of the implant previously covered by the gums, mounting on it metal posts. After that, the patient is referred back to their prosthodontist to construct crowns, bridges or dentures to secure on the posts.

Maintenance stage- to keep the rehabilitation period at an optimal, healthy length the patient must adhere to a thorough oral hygiene routine, especially around the implant area. The patient also has to regularly see a dental hygienist and follow up with prosthodontist appointments every 6 months.

I wish you a speedy recovery,
Dr. Jaron Blasbalg