

Dental implants are now a viable option in the replacement of missing teeth. They are replacements for tooth roots and can provide a strong anchor for single and multiple replacement teeth, or partial and full dentures.

There are numerous dental implant types used to replace missing teeth. The most common type is an *endosseous* or *endosteal* implant that is in the general form of a root and looks like a cone or screw. It is placed in the bone and an abutment and crown in the shape of a tooth is attached to it. Other types of implants are frameworks or plates that are less common and not addressed here.

What are the advantages of dental implants?

- **Improved appearance** – They look and feel like your own teeth.
- **Improved speech** – They are permanently fixed in your jaw so that they do not move or slip.
- **Greater comfort** – They feel like real teeth and do not move around.
- **Improved eating** – They function like real teeth.
- **Better oral health** – They have spaces between the teeth, just like real teeth, making them easier to clean.

(continued on reverse side)

What are the disadvantages of dental implants?

- **Extended timeframe** – After the implant is surgically placed, there is a waiting period of one to six months before an abutment, and then the final crown or retainer, is placed.
- **Added cost** – The initial cost is higher than with standard tooth replacement procedures.
- **Success rate** – The rate of success for implants tends to be very high in general, but varies based on the area of the mouth in which the implant is placed.

You need to be evaluated by your general dentist to see if you are a good candidate. If they feel implants may be right for you, they may send you to a periodontist for an additional opinion.

A dentist especially trained in oral surgery and implants will place the implant. This dentist may be an oral surgeon, periodontist, endodontist or a general dentist.

After a period of healing, the general dentist will place what is known as an abutment, and then the crown or retainer. This is permanent, and will look and function like a natural tooth.