KRAMES

DENTAL IMPLANTS

Restoring the Function and Appearance of Your Teeth

A New Smile

When you're missing teeth, you may not feel comfortable eating or speaking. You might even avoid smiling in public. The good news is that dental implants can help. Implants can replace a single tooth, several teeth, or all the teeth in your mouth. And when the work is finished, they look and feel like natural teeth.

When Teeth Are Missing

It can be embarrassing to have spaces in your mouth where teeth are missing. But you're not alone. People lose teeth due to many factors, including injury, decay, or gum disease. A person may be born missing teeth, or have adult teeth that need to be pulled. Whatever the reason, dental implants can help replace missing teeth. Implants often feel more natural than dentures and other dental restorations. Implants also function like natural teeth.

An Implant Can Help

A **dental implant** is an artificial tooth root. It is placed through the gum and into the jawbone during oral surgery. Your jawbone fuses with the implant to provide a secure anchor for a **prosthesis** (artificial tooth). If you are missing many teeth, several implants can be used to support a partial or complete denture.

Working With Your Dental Team

Throughout the implant process, you'll work closely with a dental team. An **oral surgeon, periodontist, prosthodontist,** or your **general dentist** prepares your jaw and surgically places the implant. Then, either your general dentist or another dental specialist will build and adjust the prosthesis.

Understanding Your Role

Depending on your needs, total treatment time can range anywhere from a couple of months up to a year. Talk with your dental team about your expectations. Why do you want implants? What do you hope the results will be? Cost can also be an issue, since insurance may not cover implants. Some things can affect healing, such as smoking and the use of certain medications. Without a strong commitment from you, implants are less likely to be successful. For best results:

- Be prepared to commit to a lifetime of good oral hygiene.
- Keep all your appointments.
- Take good care of your mouth during the implant process.
- Have dental checkups 3 to 4 times a year.
- Contact team members if you have any problems.

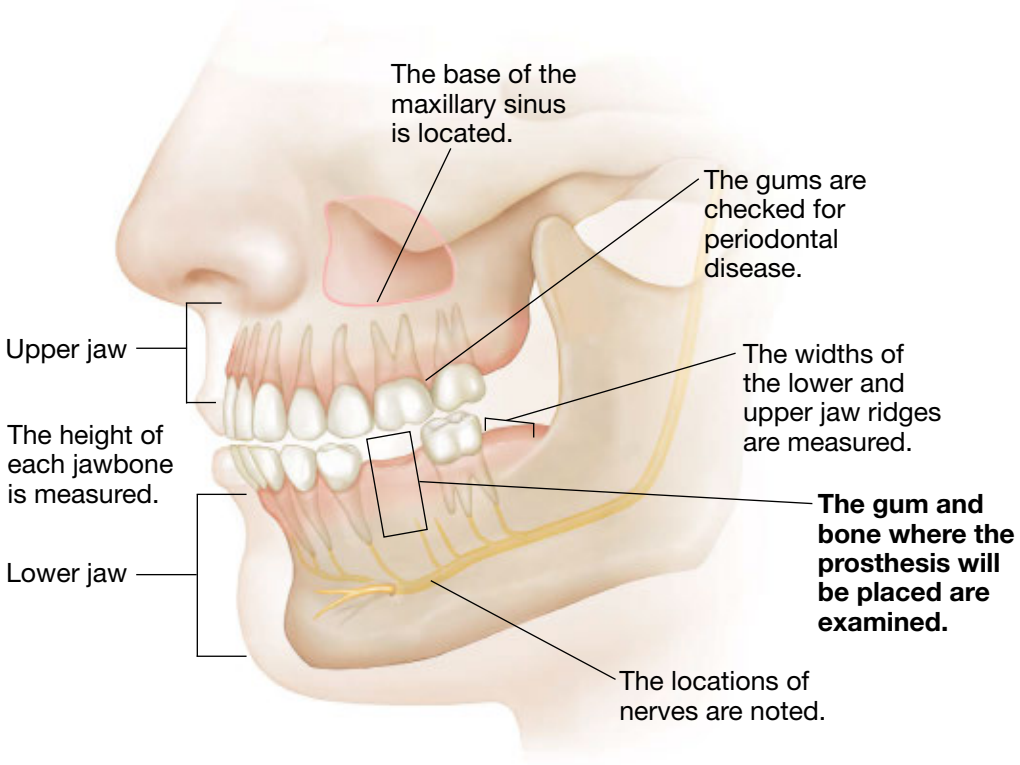
Understanding Dental Implants

To see if you're a good candidate for implants, the dental team will study the health and structure of your mouth. A medical history will be taken and imaging tests will be done. This helps the team evaluate the health of your jawbone.

Your Dental Exam

An exam tells your team about the structure of your mouth. Your bite is studied to see how your jaws and teeth fit together. The condition of your jaws, gums, head, and neck is also checked. This is done to see whether your mouth is ready to accept implants.

- **Jawbone:** The height and width of your jawbones are measured. This is done to make sure there is enough bone to hold an implant.
- **Gums:** Your gums are examined for signs of **periodontal disease** (infection of the gums and bone surrounding teeth). Treatment may include cleanings, medications, or surgery. Your gums are also checked to see if there is enough firm tissue to surround an implant.

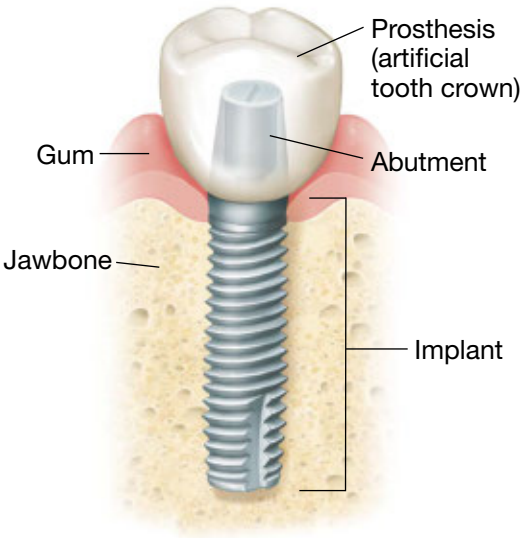


The more your dental team learns about your dental and medical history, the more successful your implant surgery is likely to be.

Evaluating Your Jaw: Imaging Tests

Imaging tests are a key part of the dental evaluation. They make it possible to view parts of the mouth and head that can't be seen during an exam. Imaging tests also help your dental team learn more about the quantity and quality of the bone in your mouth.

- **Dental x-rays** show teeth and jaws.
- **Panoramic x-rays** provide a wide view of the jaws, teeth, nerves, and sinuses. They can also help indicate bone problems.
- Other imaging tests, such as a **CT scan** or **x-ray tomography,** may also be used.



The Implant and Your Jaw

The implant and prosthesis fill the empty space left by a missing tooth or teeth. As it heals, your jawbone bonds to the implant. The prosthesis looks and feels like a real tooth. The implant process typically happens in stages. You and your doctor will talk about what this means for you.

Making the Commitment

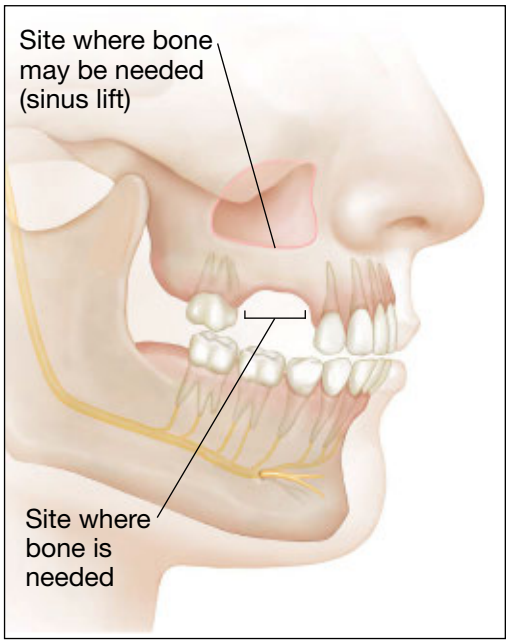
After your evaluation, the dental team will discuss treatment options with you. You may talk about alternatives to implants that might better suit your needs. You'll also discuss any dental work or special procedures you may need before the implant process can begin.

If You Need a Graft

Having a healthy mouth is just as important for implants as it is for natural teeth. If you don't have enough healthy bone or gum tissue in your mouth, you may need a graft before implants can be placed. Grafting helps build a solid foundation for the implants. You may need to wait for a graft to heal before you can have implant surgery.

Understanding Graft Surgery

Graft surgery can build up bone or gum tissue in an area where it's lacking. It can also replace bone and gum tissue that has been lost due to disease or trauma. One type of graft surgery is the **sinus lift.** This is a procedure to build up bone at the bottom of the maxillary sinus. This adds height to the jawbone, ensuring enough bone to hold an implant. The graft itself may be made of donor bone, synthetic material, or your own bone taken from another part of the body.



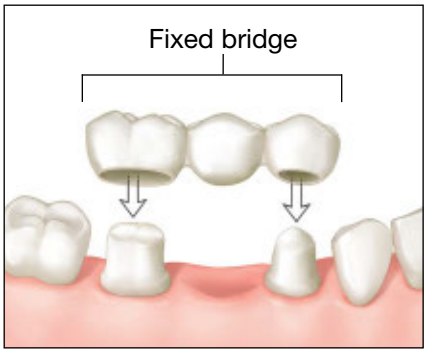
▸▸ **Grafts are needed to build up areas where healthy bone is missing.**

Forming Your Treatment Plan

If you're a good candidate for implants, the dental team will talk with you about a treatment plan. You'll also discuss the costs and time that will be involved. Keep in mind, your commitment during the process is crucial. Any existing medical conditions, such as diabetes, need to be under control. This helps ensure proper healing. And if you need a graft or treatment for periodontal disease, the process will take longer. In some cases, it will take several months before new prosthetic teeth can be attached to implants.

You Have Alternatives

If dental implants aren't right for you now, consider your alternatives. One option may be a fixed bridge to replace missing teeth. If you already have a denture, adjusting it for a better fit may help. You can also decide to have one or more implants at a later time. Review the possible risks and complications of implant surgery (see below). Together, you and your dental team will decide what's best for you.



A fixed bridge may be placed as an alternative to an implant.

Risks and Complications

Risks and complications of implant surgery may include:

- **Bleeding**
- **Infection**
- **Failure of the implant (jawbone doesn't fuse to the implant)**
- **Injury to adjacent teeth or sinus**
- **Injury to nearby nerves and muscles**

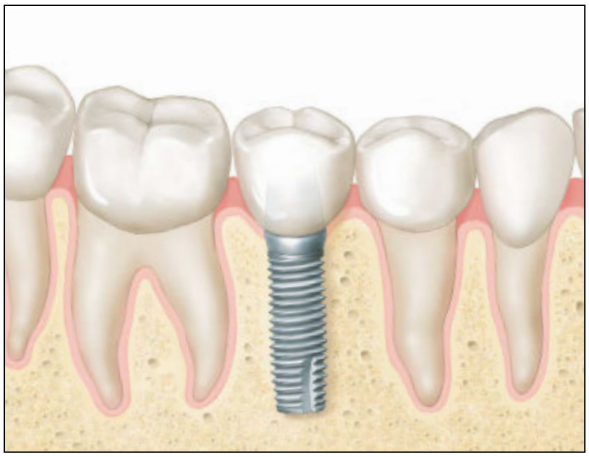
The Right Prosthesis for You

A dental prosthesis is secured to one or more implants. It can be made of one or many artificial teeth. The prosthesis you have will depend on your dental needs. If you're replacing a complete set of teeth, you may be able to choose between a removable or fixed prosthesis.

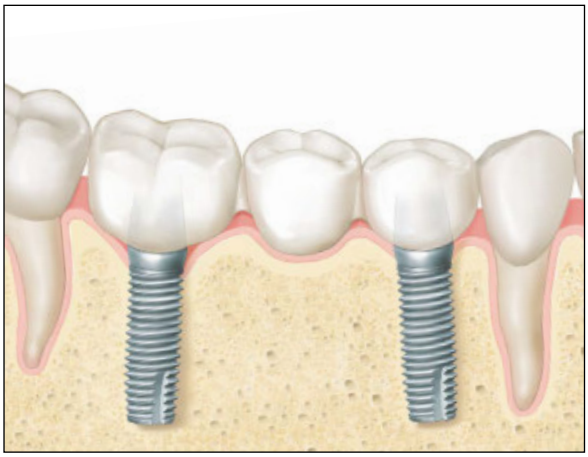
A Prosthesis to Fit Your Needs

You may have a single, partial, or complete prosthesis. This depends on how many teeth you're missing. The more teeth to be replaced, the more implants you will need. For most people, a permanent prosthesis won't be made until the jawbone has fused to the implants. Until then, a temporary prosthesis may be used.

- **A single prosthesis** is used to replace a missing tooth. One implant is all that's needed for support.
- **A fixed partial prosthesis** replaces two or more teeth. Two or more implants are used for support.
- **A complete denture prosthesis** replaces all the teeth in an upper or lower jaw, or both. The number of implants needed depends on whether a fixed or removable prosthesis is used.



▸▸ A single prosthesis is used to replace a tooth that has been lost.



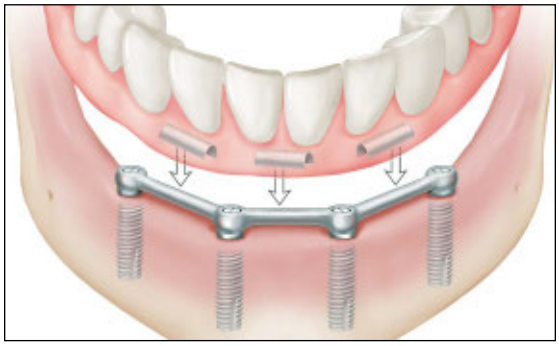
▸▸ A fixed partial prosthesis uses at least two implants to replace two or more teeth.

Types of Complete Prostheses

There are two types of complete denture prostheses: removable and fixed. Both can be used to replace a complete set of teeth. Removable means you'll be able to take it out of your mouth. Fixed means it can only be taken out by a dentist. You and your dentist can discuss which type is best for you.

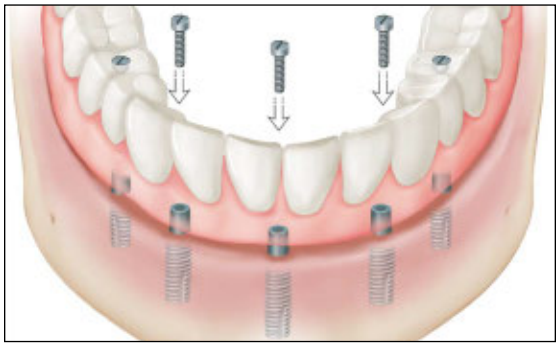
A complete denture prosthesis is an alternative to a traditional complete denture.

Choosing a Removable or Fixed Complete Prosthesis



Removable Prosthesis

With a removable prosthesis, the new teeth are joined to the implants by a connecting device, such as a clip and bar. This allows you to take the prosthesis out for cleaning. For support, this type often uses two or more implants per jaw.



Fixed Prosthesis

With a fixed prosthesis, the new teeth are fitted to a frame that is secured to the implants. Two or more implants are placed along the contour of the jaw. A fixed prosthesis may offer more stability for chewing.

The Implant Procedure

A surgical procedure is used to place implants in your jawbone. Successful implants depend on the jawbone fusing to the implant. You can help this process along by keeping your gums and teeth especially clean during the healing process.

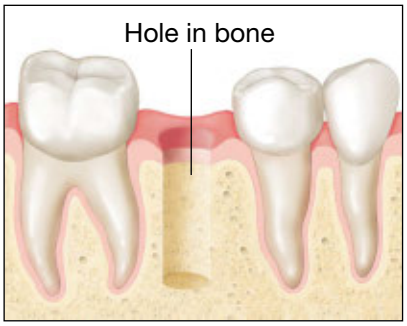
Placing the Implant

Most implant surgeries are performed in a dental office. To prepare, follow your dental team's instructions. Also:

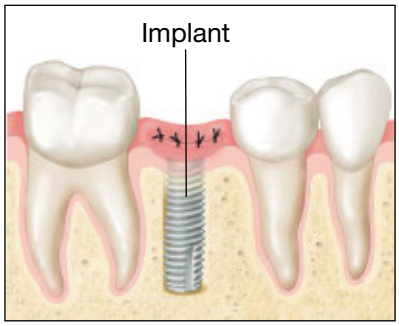
- **Discuss all of the medications you take** with your dental team. This includes over-the-counter medications, herbs and supplements, insulin, bisphosphonate or similar medications, and blood thinners such as aspirin.
- **Wear comfortable clothes** to the appointment.
- **Take antibiotics** if prescribed.
- **Arrange for an adult** to give you a ride home. Also, don't eat or drink after the midnight before the procedure or as directed by your dental team.

Your Experience

You may be asked to rinse your mouth with an antiseptic. You may also be given medication to help you relax or to make you sleepy. Right before the procedure, the jaw is numbed. Then the jawbone is prepared so the implants can be placed. If you're awake, you'll hear sounds and feel vibrations. But you shouldn't feel any pain. The length of the procedure depends on how many implants are placed.



Preparing the bone: A small opening is made in the gum to expose the jawbone. A hole is slowly drilled into the bone.



Placing the implant: The implant is twisted or tapped into position. The incision is closed with stitches, if needed.

After the Procedure

When the implant procedure is over, you can go home as soon as you feel able. Be aware that a certain amount of swelling and minor bleeding is normal. To speed recovery, be sure to follow your dental team's instructions. You may be told to:

- Drink only clear liquids for the rest of the day.
- Take pain medications and antibiotics.
- Avoid putting pressure on your jaw.
- Eat soft foods for the first few days as your mouth begins to heal.
- Avoid wearing your temporary prosthesis or denture for a certain amount of time.

Taking Care of Your Mouth

Much of the healing process depends on keeping your teeth and gums clean. If you don't take care of your mouth, you risk infection. This could cause implants to fail. For best results:

- Use a soft toothbrush to clean your teeth and gums after every meal.
- Clean the areas near your incisions. But do not brush the incisions themselves.
- Use an antiseptic rinse if prescribed.

Follow-Up Care

It often takes a few months for the jawbone to firmly attach to implants. During that time, you'll have several follow-up visits with your dental team. This is to see how well your jaw is healing. If you wear a denture, you may also visit your general dentist. He or she may put a new lining in your denture for greater comfort.

When to Call Your Surgeon

Call your surgeon if you have any of the following:

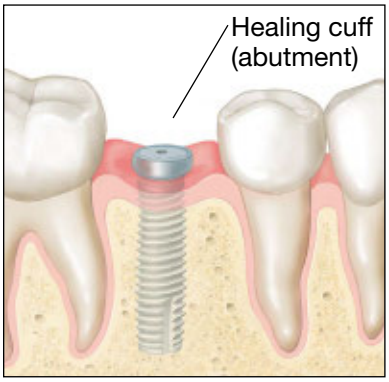
- **Significant swelling around the face and neck or under the tongue**
- **Bleeding that won't stop**
- **Numbness that doesn't go away after the anesthesia wears off**
- **Pain in the jaws, mouth, or sinuses that isn't relieved by prescribed medication**
- **A fever of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher**

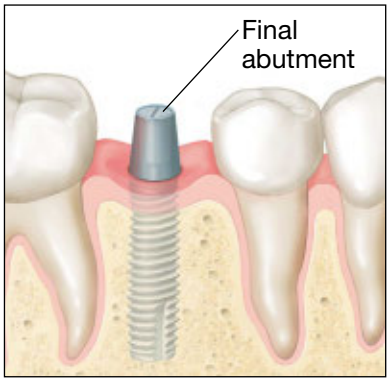
Placing Abutments and Fitting Your Prosthesis

Abutments are connecting pieces that join the prosthesis to the implants. They help gum tissue heal around the implant site. They may be placed at the same time as implants. But surgery to place abutments is most often done after the jawbone has fused to the implants. This second surgery takes less time than the first.

Placing Abutments

A small incision is made in the gum tissue. A healing abutment (or cuff) helps gum tissue heal around the implant site. Once the gum has healed, final abutments are placed so the prosthesis can be joined with the implant.





When You Have Abutments

Healing time for abutments can vary from person to person. Follow your dental team's advice about what kinds of food to eat. You will also be taught how to clean around the abutments. Proper cleaning prevents infection and promotes healing.

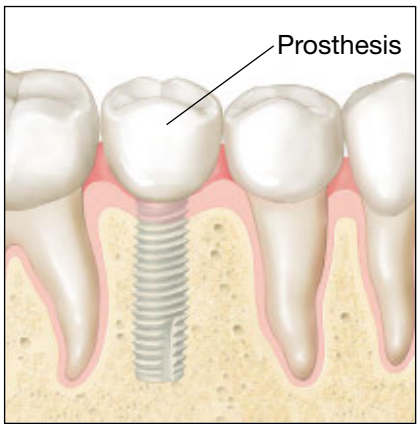
After Abutments Are Placed

Call your surgeon if you have any of the following:

- **Bleeding that won't stop**
- **Pain in the jaws, mouth, or sinuses that isn't relieved by prescribed medication**
- **A fever of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher**
- **An abutment that feels loose**

Preparing Your Prosthesis

To custom-fit the prosthesis, your dentist will make impressions (molds) of your jaws, teeth, and abutments. Bite registrations are also made to see how your teeth fit together. These molds are used to create a model of your mouth. Your new prosthesis is then made from this model.



The crown may be screwed or cemented to the abutment. In some cases, they are a single unit.

Fitting Your Prosthesis

Once the prosthesis is ready, you'll have several fittings to see how it feels in your mouth. After any needed adjustments are made, the prosthesis is attached to the abutments. You may be told not to eat hard or crunchy foods for a few weeks after the prosthesis is attached.

After Your Prosthesis Is Placed

Call your dentist if you have any of these problems:

- **Pain in the jaws**
- **A bite that feels wrong**
- **A prosthesis that feels loose, chips, or breaks**
- **Implants or abutments that feel loose**

Good Habits to Last a Lifetime

To ensure that your implants last, take good care of your mouth. Brush and floss every day, and have regular checkups with your dental team. If you don't keep your mouth in good shape, your implants can fail. This may require more surgery to correct.

Brushing After Meals

Brush your teeth, prosthesis, and abutments after every meal and at bedtime. With a removable prosthesis, be sure to brush it inside and out. Brush the gumline and the gum around your abutments. Call your dentist if you have trouble cleaning your prosthesis or abutments.

Removable Prosthesis

Fixed Prosthesis

Daily Flossing

Flossing cleans areas a toothbrush can't reach. Floss between your teeth and around your prosthesis at least once a day. For best results, you should also floss up and down along the abutments.

Removable Prosthesis

Fixed Prosthesis

Special Cleaning Aids

Foam-coated floss and an interdental brush can help clean abutments. A powered toothbrush can make it easier to clean your prosthesis and abutments. And prescription dental rinses can help rid your mouth of bacteria. Ask your dentist to tell you more.

Make and Keep Appointments

Commit yourself to a lifetime of good dental care. See members of your dental team as often as directed. Regular care is important for the health of your implants. During appointments:

- Your abutments are cleaned, and any needed adjustments or repairs are made to the prosthesis.
- Your implants and the health of your jaws and gums are checked. You will also have x-rays to evaluate the bone around the implant.
- Your teeth are cleaned to maintain good oral health.

To Keep Feeling Secure

With your prosthesis in place, you'll be able to speak and smile with confidence. To make your implants and prosthesis last, follow these tips:

- Stop smoking!
- Avoid chewing on hard objects like ice or popcorn kernels.
- Control health problems such as diabetes.
- Contact your dental team right away if you notice any problems with your implants or prosthesis.

A Winning Smile

It takes time and effort to make dental implants successful. So commit yourself to the care of your mouth. Brush and floss, and see your dental team for checkups. That way, you can keep smiling with comfort and confidence.

Resources

- **American Dental Association**
  http://www.mouthhealthy.org/en/az-topics/i/implants
- **American Academy of Periodontology**
  www.perio.org/consumer/dental-implants
- **American Academy of Implant Dentistry**
  www.aaid-implant.org
- **American College of Prosthodontists**
  www.gotoapro.org

Also available in Spanish

TAKE OUR PATIENT SURVEY. Help us help other patients.
Please visit **www.KramesSurvey.com** to provide your feedback on this booklet.

This booklet is not intended as a substitute for professional medical care.
Only your doctor can diagnose and treat a medical problem.
©2013, 2015, 2019 Krames, LLC. **www.kramesstore.com 800.333.3032**
All rights reserved. Made in the USA.

KRAMES®

2211979 1810