

## **IMPLANT FAQ's**

### **What are they?**

An implant is the best long term solution to replacing a missing tooth. It is able to act as the root of the tooth, upon which a prosthetic tooth can be placed. The implant is composed of titanium and is placed surgically into the jaw bone. This surgical procedure can be carried out under local anaesthetic, usually less than what would be needed for a tooth extraction.

Titanium has the ability to allow the bone to attach to the surface by a process termed osseointegration, which allows the implant to be held solidly in the jaw. This process occurs during the healing phase which can take 3 – 6 months. Crowns and bridges can then be attached to the implant replacing the missing teeth and giving a good aesthetic result. Implants can also be used to help support and retain dentures within the mouth.

### **How long will it last? Success rates?**

There is a small chance the implant may fail to osseointegrate therefore is not attached to the bone. There is a 2 – 3 % chance of this happening and it would usually be evident during the healing phase following implant placement. If it did, we would remove the implant and replace it a few weeks later.

When the implant is integrated, the implant should give you many years of satisfactory function and appearance. Although, it is not possible to know whether the implant will last for life or even what we can expect in terms of long term survival. We do not have data providing success rates beyond 20 years but within that time there is a 95% chance of success.

What we do know, is that an implant is the most predictable and long lasting solution to replacing missing teeth that we can provide currently.

The quality and quantity of bone present has an influence on how successful the implant will be. There has to be adequate bone tissue surrounding the implant to allow for osseointegration to occur. We sometimes have to provide a replacement if there is not enough bone which can usually be carried out at the same time as implant placement.

### **What stages are involved in the course of treatment?**

It would begin with implant placement under local anaesthetic. Implant placement requires less local anaesthetic than tooth extraction.

You should expect a minor degree of discomfort and swelling. You may find you suffer from a degree of bruising around the area where the implant was placed. But you should be able to continue normally almost immediately.

Between 2 and 4 months later, a minor procedure will be carried out to expose the implant fixture and a healing cap is placed allowing tissues to heal around it creating a more natural appearance of the soft tissues before crown placement. The healing cap will be left for a few weeks. Following this, impressions will be taken to allow for crown fabrication. The lab turnaround is typically 10 – 14 days.

Alternatively, the healing cap can be placed at the time of implant placement but this decision can only be made at the time of surgery.

#### Maintenance?

Similarly to teeth, implants need maintained when in the mouth. Regular visits to the dentist and hygienist to keep them clean and check they are healthy.

When not maintained, infection can occur around the implant called peri – implantitis. This is similar to periodontitis that can develop around natural teeth.

#### Can I eat normally?

At first, allow to heal taking care not to put too much pressure on the surgical area with temporary prosthesis. A fairly soft diet should be eaten during the first few months of implant placement, hard and crusty foods should be avoided.

Once osseous – integrated i.e. healed and fused to the bone and the definitive crown/bridge is fitted; these teeth should be used like your own natural teeth. An implant should restore full function.

#### Will I need any medication following surgery?

In cases where bone grafting has occurred, antibiotic therapy will be prescribed following surgery.

Analgesics are advised following surgery to decrease inflammation and discomfort.