

An Implant For All Occasions...

One of the really cool services that most dentists now offer is dental implants. I know I've written about them before, but the subject bears repeating. Similar to other medical implants, dental implants are made of a titanium alloy that is inert and accepted by the cells of your body. Most modern implants resemble a short, fat screw that is placed into the jaw bone where a tooth once lived. The process may sound painful, but it is not. Amazingly, the jaw bone that holds your teeth in place has little to no innervation, so placing an implant is almost always far less traumatic than having the tooth out in the first place. We always prescribe post-op pain medication, but I cannot remember the last patient that actually had to take anything for pain.

These titanium tooth root replacements can be used in a variety of ways. Temporary implants can be used in conjunction with braces to move stubborn teeth. The most common use is what we call single tooth replacement. Many times, we can actually remove a tooth, place an implant, and put on a temporary tooth all in one visit. Implants can also be "connected" to replace a segment of missing teeth. As a matter of fact, we can replace *all* of your missing teeth with dental implants. It takes a lot of planning, but the results are amazing and life changing.

My favorite use of dental implants has to do with dentures. Most people who have dentures absolutely hate their bottom set of teeth. This is because the tongue and the floor of the mouth are constantly moving and knocking the denture loose. I've heard many an embarrassing story of lost lower dentures. Today, we can put in two to four implants that allow us to make a denture that "snaps" into place and doesn't flop around. These implants can also be used to "snap" in an upper denture for people who cannot tolerate all that plastic across the roof of their mouth. Sometimes it's possible to retrofit your current plate to the new implants, depending how old and worn the denture is. Of all the things we do to help people, this is one of the most rewarding.

The two most common questions we get about implants are: "Does it hurt?" and "Is it expensive?"

As for the first question, no, it is not a painful procedure. I've yet to have anyone report any pain. As far as cost, implants are going to be your most expensive tooth replacement option. This is definitely a case where the best is well worth the extra cost.

Until next time, keep smiling.

-Questions or comments can be sent to Drs. Parrish at ParrishDental@aol.com.