

Dental Implants Part II

By Dr. Chiann Fan Gibson

In my last column I wrote briefly about dental implants and how you can restore a missing tooth with the exciting advancements of dentistry. I discussed who should consider an implant and the advantages or disadvantages of having this procedure done. I've received a number of e-mails asking for more information on this topic. So here it is.

Dental implants are artificial replacements for natural tooth roots. They are surgically placed into the gum and jawbone and eventually become firmly attached or integrated. Your general dentist can then restore the implant or artificial tooth root with a crown or implant prosthesis. For those looking to restore a single or multiple missing teeth, implants are the ideal choice option. Partial dentures and full dentures can also be anchored into the mouth with implants.

The success rate of integrated dental implants is 94 percent to 98 percent. For those with excellent oral hygiene habits and who are also nonsmokers, it's closer to 100 percent. Implants can last for more than 30 years and often for a lifetime. However, there are factors to be considered such as history of periodontal disease, smoking, home care and routine checkups. In addition to the implant's life, I also mention that the crown portion or the prosthesis on the implants require maintenance as they are not forever.

Timeline

The most common questions I receive are, "What is incorporated in the initial process?" "When will the final restoration be done?" And "What will the financial costs be?"

The length of time from beginning to end may vary by the condition of your jawbone. For some individuals, their jawbone may not be thick enough or is too soft. This may require a procedure called bone grafting. Implant surgery requires a proper amount of bone width and height. In your initial consultation, your periodontist or oral surgeon may require that you have X-rays and/or a CT scan to determine whether you are a good candidate for implants and whether you need bone grafting to allow for the success of implant surgery. Bone grafting procedures allow for a more stable and solid base for an implant.

Treatment time from the placement of an implant until a final restoration may take three to 12 months. It can take as little as six weeks to as much as three to four months for the lower jaw implants

to heal completely. For the upper jaw, the healing can take as little as six weeks to as much as six to nine months. This is on an individual basis by the type condition of the mouth.

Costs

Fees generally vary depending on the amount of implants as well as the final restoration. Some insurance companies may cover a portion of the implant treatment. Portions that are covered generally are the restorative part - implant crowns, implant bridge, implant partial or full denture. Fees generally range from \$2,000 to \$2,800 for a single dental implant. This fee does not cover the consultation, X-rays, surgical guide stents, models, nor the restorative crown or implant prosthesis. There may also be other expenses based on other procedures that were not discussed such as a dental CAT scan, bone grafting or gum grafting procedures. These procedures are added expenses that may be required for an implant case.

Before you restore your missing tooth with fixed bridgework or a removable appliance, ask your dentist about implant options. Implants are the ideal option for those who have lost a tooth, several teeth or all their teeth due to periodontal disease, an injury or for whatever the reason. I hope that this gives you more insight into implants with reference to my first article that discussed the procedure's advantages and disadvantages.