

## The Dental Implant Process

Replacing a tooth with a dental implant is generally a multiple phase process. These phases differ depending on the tooth that is being replaced. Below is a list of some of the conditions and considerations.

### *General*

1. Does a tooth or root need to be removed prior to implant placement?
2. Is the tooth severely infected?
3. Is there bone or gum loss in the area of implant placement?
  - i. If a tooth was removed weeks, months, or years prior to implant placement, it is often necessary to rebuild the bone and gums for optimal function and esthetics prior to implant placement.

Dental implants do not decay. Dental implants do not have painful nerves. The bone around dental implants has fewer nerves and generally are painless during function. Once a tooth is removed, the bone supporting that tooth often begins to dissolve and disappear. It is advisable to place implants to support that bone within 12 months of a tooth extraction.

### *Site specific*

- **Front Teeth:**
  - **Esthetics and matching adjacent teeth**
  - **Top or Maxillary front teeth:**
    - Gingival recession. Generally, implant placement causes a minimum of 1 millimeter of recession and often need secondary gingival grafting to achieve optimal esthetic results
    - These teeth can often be removed and receive a dental implant placed in the same appointment.
    - In some cases, a temporary tooth can be placed on the implant at the time of implant placement if stable bone and gums are present.
  - **Bottom of Mandibular front teeth:**
    - The bone around the front bottom teeth is often very thin and narrow.
    - Removal of one or more adjacent teeth for implant placement may be required
- **Side or "middle" (bicuspid) teeth:**
  - Generally, the implant is placed at the time of tooth removal
  - In some cases, a temporary tooth can be attached to the implant at time of placement
  - Lower bicuspid (side) teeth, often reside are often situated just above the exit site of the nerve that supplies sensation to your lower lip of the same side. Careful evaluation need to be evaluated in consideration of is required before implant placement in this area.
- **Back or molar teeth:**
  - **Upper or Maxillary molars**
    - Upper molars generally have 3 roots. That means 3 holes are left when the tooth is removed. If infection is present and the bone is compromised, the bone supporting the roots is removed during the extraction process and leaves one big hole. This is not optimal for

implant placement at the time of extraction. It is often necessary to support and stimulate the regrowth of this bone through the process of bone grafting following an upper molar extraction.

- Even if sufficient bone is present, the size of the hole left in the gums following this extraction may require time to allow the gums to regrow prior to implant placement.
- A dental implant is often smaller in diameter than that tooth being replaced. Thus, you will often have some increase in the gingival indentations around a molar dental implant. In this situation, excellent oral hygiene is critical for success.
- A maxillary sinus (a void in the jaw bone loosely associated with your nasal sinuses) resides just above most upper molars and some upper bicuspid or side teeth. It is often necessary to reposition the sinus floor by grafting bone at the base of the sinus. Though this sounds awful, it is generally a routine, minimally invasive procedure for many trained surgeons. Please ask your doctor about your personal situation.
- **Lower or Mandibular Molars**
  - Lower molars generally have two large roots. Due to the positioning of these roots it is often advisable to regrow the bone and gum tissues prior to implant placement. Gingival and placement considerations are similar to upper molars.
  - The lower jaw has one large nerve as well as some small branches of nerves. Though it is often far enough away from the site of implant placement, not grafting (growing) the bone prior to implant placement will often lead to unnecessary risk of nerve injury and temporary or permanent loss of lip sensation.
  - If previous extraction was completed without grafting the bone, or is a long time has passed following the removal of a tooth, the bone can resorb and additional procedures prior to implant placement may be necessary

Dental implants are exceptional treatment options for tooth replacement. You should be comfortable in asking your surgeon and restorative dentist any and all questions you may have prior to dental implant tooth replacement therapy.