

Prosthodontics of Central Indiana

Dental Implants and Implant Restorations

Dental implants are one of the most sophisticated medical devices used today to improve your health. Although they look and function like natural teeth, there are a few differences and maintenance requirements that are important for you to know.

Implant restorations are different from natural teeth in the following ways:

- Discomfort or pain are rarely felt, even if there are issues
- If issues do arise with implants, they occur at a faster rate than issues with natural teeth
- Implants have mechanical components such as screws and connecting joints
- Implants do not have the capacity to move or change position, unlike natural teeth: there is no elastic stress-breaker between implant and bone.
- More frequent visits to the hygienist may be required as dental plaque can negatively affect implants

Implant Crowns

Changes with time

As you age, your body continues to grow and change. Gaps between implants and natural teeth, or teeth with crowns on, can occur as a result. Because of this, you may need modifications to the implant restorations, or new ones, after a number of years. Sometimes this is better addressed by modifying the adjacent tooth or restoration.

Looseness

Implant crowns can occasionally become loose or come out. If this occurs, please contact our office as quickly as possible. If an implant crown comes uncemented, it is best to get it back into the mouth right away using a mirror to orient it correctly. A tiny amount of denture adhesive can be put on the underside to temporarily hold the crown to the implant abutment. This is important because if left out, the gum tissue can grow or fold into the space normally occupied by the crown and make it difficult to replace the crown (the gum then has to be numbed and surgically trimmed).

Night or Occlusal Guard

Implants are not attached to the body by an elastic ligament as teeth are, so they cannot move when placed under pressure as natural teeth can. Many people clench and grind their teeth, especially at night time, which places undue stress on implant restorations. To avoid damage to your implants and the porcelain crowns placed on them, we recommend you wear a night guard and have it checked regularly (bring it to your 3-or 6-monthly recall and cleaning appointments).

Dental Hygiene

Very good oral hygiene is essential with dental implants. More frequent visits to the hygienist are often advised. Flossing around an implant requires a more exaggerated wrapping motion (like shoe shining the heel of a shoe when seated), since the implant is generally of a much smaller diameter than the crown that is placed on it. A water flosser, such as a WaterPik, with variable settings from 1-10 in power will assist in home hygiene for multi-unit implant fixed partial dentures and hybrid restorations.

Full Arch Fixed Implant (Hybrid) Restorations

These are the ultimate fixed teeth for patients needing to transition from natural teeth to artificial replacement teeth. Special oral hygiene measures are required to maintain this type of prosthesis and the connection to the implants, which are as or more detailed than cleaning natural teeth. It is impossible for anyone with a moderate to severe reduction in manual dexterity to manage cleaning these unassisted.

Hybrids are fixed permanently to the implants but must be removed once a year for cleaning and maintenance. New retaining screws should be placed at that time.

When acrylic denture teeth are used on these, they gradually wear down and require replacement after a period of time, which may vary from 5-7 years. Placing new teeth is economical compared with making a new prosthesis but requires the appliance to be in the dental laboratory for 7-10 days. The previous provisional prosthesis can be worn during this time.

When the prosthesis is made with ceramic teeth, wear is a much slower process, and may not be a practical concern for 10-15 years, possibly longer. Chipping or fracturing may become an issue eventually, but most of our designs of this kind can have the teeth replaced, individually, or as a full arch set.

Implant Retained Overdentures

These are dentures that are held in the mouth using snap attachments connected to implants. There is minimal movement during function, and they are a solution that is many times better than conventional dentures. They are removed for cleaning and for the cleaning of the snap attachments or bar, making oral hygiene very easy.

Bonded to the inside of the dentures are snap attachments. These are made of a "smart polymer" and give retention and shock absorption. The attachments wear gradually over time, and may need to be changed every 6-18 months. The part of the attachment that is connected to the implant also may wear gradually over a number of years. If this occurs, removal and replacement of this component is straightforward and moderate in cost.

The acrylic denture teeth on overdentures gradually wear and the prosthesis may need to be replaced in 8-12 years, depending on individual factors. They also occasionally need to be relined (refitted to the gum tissue), but this is required less frequently than with conventional dentures.