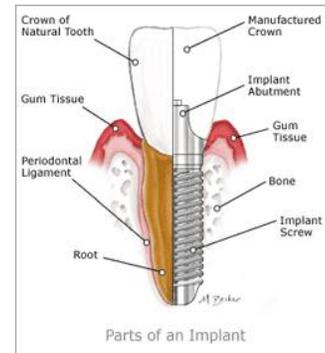


Implant Alternatives to Dentures: Choices and Cost

Do you hate your dentures? If so, dental implants may be the answer you are seeking. Implants are safe, strong, have a well-documented history of success, and work for just about anyone at any age.

What is a Dental Implant?

A dental implant can be thought of as a “new root” replacement for the root of a missing tooth. The implant is made of pure titanium (the same material used in medicine for hip replacements), and is very strong and bio-compatible. Your bone and gums will grow against the new implant and integrate against the surface for a strong fusion and seal, providing strength, stability, and support for your bone and surrounding teeth. And unlike dentures, implants have a 20-40 year success rate in the 98% range!



Advantages of Implants

- The bone that originally supported the roots of teeth is retained (retention of bone mass)
- Improved esthetic tooth positioning and bite height dimension maintenance
- Improved psychological health
- Regained biting awareness, stability, and superior chewing
- Increased retention
- Longevity—implants last 15 to 40 years.
- Better speech
- Adjacent teeth are not compromised
- No plastic on the roof of the mouth-- better speech, thermal sensation, and ability to taste

Making Your Choice

First of all, if you have teeth, work with your dentist to save them. As good as dental implants are, nothing can truly replace your own natural teeth. It is always best to save the teeth that can be predictably and comfortably be preserved if you can.

There are a number of things to consider when making a choice about having dental implants. If you currently wear dentures and are miserable, uncomfortable and uncertain about your future, remember that you do have choices: You can keep worrying about your dentures flying out when you laugh or cough (and wondering “where the goop was left”!) or you can explore the other safer, more contemporary options that include the use of dental implants.

Please consider the following factors carefully:

Comfort factors

How much do pinched gums, gooey adhesives, and dentures that fall out affect your life and confidence?



Health factors

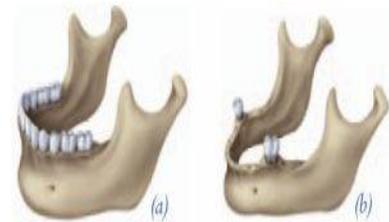
Dentures are no longer the treatment of choice (we cover this information further in our Report entitled “Health Hazards of Tooth Loss and Long-Term Denture Use”.)

Force and support Factors

Are you a physically larger or more petite person? Are you chewing against another loosely fastened denture or strong teeth? What is the shape of your jawbone? All of these factors must be taken into account when making an informed decision about your treatment plan.

Surrounding bone

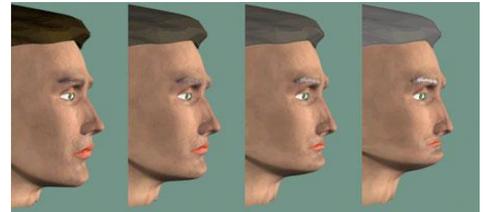
A properly trained dentist can determine the quality and quantity of bone a patient has available for implants. In many cases advanced technologies such as CT bone scans, computer topographic analysis, and 3-dimensional computer studies are utilized. These allow for extremely accurate measurements of the quality, quantity, and shape of bone available for precise implant placement.



Notice how the bone “withers away” after the teeth are lost

Facial esthetics

Have your cheeks begun to sag or sink in? Has your facial profile changed? Have the facial changes contributed to wrinkles and premature aging?



Smile esthetics

The shape, size, surface texture, gums, and color all affect the perception of “youthfulness” of a smile.

Implant Supported Alternatives

The best way to determine a proper treatment plan is to schedule a consultation and examination to find out if you have bone loss, and if you’ll need one, two, or more implants. The actual cost of implant treatment is based on a number of factors, such as the number of teeth being replaced, the type of treatment option recommended and whether additional procedures are necessary to achieve the proper esthetic and functional results.

Sometimes interim solutions can be provided as funding becomes available. For example, a patient could begin with two implants and an implant retained denture and later have additional implants and a more comfortable implant supported bridge placed.

Let’s explore some of the options in more detail:

Mini Implants

Mini-implants are smaller than regular implant and allow a prosthetic to be locked into the bone. While they are not as strong or as long lasting as regular implants, a patient can chew virtually anything without the fear of losing their teeth or becoming embarrassed while talking.

Notice 2 "regular implants of left and Mini-implant on right

The mini-implant System consists of a miniature titanium implant that acts like the root of your tooth, and a retainer fixture that is incorporated into the base of your denture. Advantages of the mini implants are:

- Placed in as little as one visit
- Lower cost than traditional implants
- No long healing period
- Secures dentures immediately

Mini-implants can take the anxiety out of waiting for permanent full-sized implants to "take hold." If the implants are being placed to stabilize a denture or to replace a long bridge or partial denture, mini-implants can stabilize replacement teeth to function comfortably and predictably in the interim.

Although mini-implants are incredibly useful, they must be placed by a very competent dentist. Factors such as bone availability and bone density, along with esthetic and "force" factors" (such as biting force) must be carefully determined before mini-implants can be considered. Due to these factors, they typically work best to retain (not support) lower dentures.



Implant Retained Denture ("Overdenture")

Implant retained dentures are fast, affordable, and offer a superior fixation of teeth. Implant supported dentures do not move, so gum comfort is greatly enhanced and most patients report that they can "chew anything" again. . By placing two to four implants, the denture can be "locked down" and thus can become an effective denture replacement. Bone loss is stopped in the area of the implants, but can still continue in the area behind the implants.

There are considerations regarding future bone loss in the posterior areas (back teeth). Implant retained dentures can increase posterior bone resorption (bone loss in the rear of the mouth).

Implant retained dentures do require ongoing maintenance, including the purchase of cleaners, as well as regular appointments with your dentist for relines. Even with these concerns an implant retained denture is a vast improvement over a normal denture.



Implant Supported Denture

Implant supported dentures are the next step in comfort over the implant retained dentures. Additional implants are required for the extra support—usually 4 to 5 in the lower jaw and 5 to 6 in the upper jaw. An implant supported denture offers additional comfort because a sub-structure is added between the implants and the denture which completely lifts the denture off the gum tissue. Since the denture does not rest directly on the gums, the stress on the gums and on the bone is greatly reduced and future bone loss in the posterior areas of the mouth is alleviated. An implant supported denture is more costly than the implant retained denture, but will be more secure, provide better tissue comfort, and will support the bone and face better.



A Note about Overdentures vs. Dentures

As long ago as 2002, a consensus conference at McGill University in Montreal concluded that a two, three, or four implant overdenture would be the best long term, economical, and least invasive way to solve the patient's problems. Their conclusions were:

“...the evidence clearly shows that the restoration of the edentulous mandible [a lower jaw that required a denture] with a conventional denture is no longer the most appropriate first-choice treatment. There is overwhelming evidence that an implant overdenture should be the first choice of treatment.”

In other words—dentures are no longer the “standard of care” that they used to be 20 years ago. There are just too many health consequences!

All-on-4 Procedure or “Teeth in a Day”

The All-on-4 procedure allows, in many cases, for fewer implants to be placed and yet still support an implant supported bridge. The advantage of the All-on-4 Procedure is that of speed, as the restoration can be completed more quickly. The biggest disadvantage is the risk of failure. If any one of the four implants fails, the entire restoration collapses. This procedure is considered too risky; conventional treatment only takes approximately 3-4 months longer and is much more likely to succeed long term.



Fixed Implant Supported Bridge

A fixed implant bridge is a permanent solution with minimal ongoing maintenance. Missing teeth are replaced and the bridge is bolted down with “new teeth” that look great. There are no dietary limitations and food tastes normal, patient can feel the texture, hot and cold, and consistency of food



Upper Implant Supported Bridge



Lower Implant Supported Bridge

Most important they can virtually eat and chew what they want to again. This treatment modality is the most similar to natural teeth and offers the best fit. Unlike dentures, there is no plastic on the roof of the mouth and the bridge cannot be removed by anyone but your dentist. A fixed implant bridge also helps to preserve bone and facial structure which prevents facial wrinkles and sunken cheeks.

While there can be a larger financial investment with additional implants and laboratory costs, please be aware that this treatment is backed by over 40 years of clinical use and research and has a very high, well documented, and long term success rate.

What is the Procedure for complete Replacement of a Denture?



1: Before the procedure

The dentist determines what needs to be done and prepares both himself and the patient for the coming treatment procedure.



2. Installing the implants

The first step is installing dental implants to replace the lost tooth roots. The number of implants placed depends on bone condition and the implantologist’s judgement. If conventional implants are done, temporary dentures can be opted to be made or your old dentures may be worn that enable you to eat and function while the implants are left to heal and integrate with the jaw bone.



3. Attaching the bridge

The final step is the making and securely installing the fixed bridge on top of the implants.



4. End result

Your new teeth should be hard to tell from natural – both for you and others. People who have had traditional dentures before getting a fixed bridge often describe this as an overwhelming and very positive experience.

What's the Best Alternative?

An implant supported bridge is the ultimate replacement for dentures and a permanent restoration for individuals who have lost all of their teeth. It is a long lasting solution (often for life) and may also be an “upgrade” from implant retained or support overdentures.

- May be an “upgrade from implant retained or support overdentures.
- Lets you eat and function like having natural teeth.
- A solid and stable solution relative to dentures.
- Preserves your facial appearance and prevents bone loss.
- Immediate function in mandible and maxilla.
- Gives a nice natural smile with better esthetics relative to dentures.
- Offers a long-lasting solution, often for life.
- Renewed confidence and improved quality of life as well.
- Are not removable—can not fall out!
- [Chewing restored to the level of natural teeth.](#)
- No plastic on the roof of the mouth allowing natural chewing and taste!



How About a Ballpark Price?

Because each person's situation is unique, it is impossible to quote a price without first determining each person's distinct wants and clinical situation. There is no "one size fits all fee." If a fixed price was quoted, some patients would underpay and some would overpay.

Implant dentistry certainly is much more costly than the "conventional" dentistry. The benefits of implants far outweigh the benefits of wearing dentures or living with missing teeth. While a subjective cost analysis may show that implants are more costly initially, implants have greater longevity and are less expensive over the long-term. Many patients find the negative health factors associated with dentures and the loss of their quality of life far outweighs initial implant costs.

Cost Comparisons

One patient compared the costs of the various treatment options using car prices as an analogy:

"Dentures would be like buying a rusted out wreck. Mini-implants would be like buying a used car. Implant retained dentures like purchasing an inexpensive car. Implant support overdentures would like purchasing a nice car. And both All-on-4 and implant supported bridges are like buying a luxury automobile."

This analogy is very broad, and again, the treatment plan depends largely on the individual. An additional consideration is where a patient can begin within the scope of a longer-range treatment plan. For example, a patient may be able to start out with an implant retained denture, and then convert to an implant supported denture a year later.

But "I'm Too Old!"

Finally, if you think you are too old to consider the alternatives to dentures, consider this: At age 65 a female has a 19% chance of living an additional 30 years, a 40% chance of living an additional 25 years and a nearly 10% chance of living to age 100! *Quality* of life plays an enormous role in how you actually live your life.

Let me share a story with you about one of my patients.

Quality of Life or Price--A True Story:

One of my more memorable patients was a 92 year lady named Olga. She was in good but not excellent health. She was very thin and a little frail, and had great spirit.

Olga's complaint was that she could not chew food properly and that her dentures fell out when speaking. Having "old-fashioned" dentistry her entire life, she now wanted dental implants to restore some of her lost function.

We placed two implants in her upper jaw, and three in her lower jaw to “fasten down” her dentures.

Olga lived to be 3 weeks short of age 96 and moved hundreds of miles from the office. Her daughter came into the office and thanked us “for giving her mother’s life back”. She said that after having the implants her mother regained some of the lost weight and vigor she previously had [proper nutrition and ability to eat good foods!] Also, her daughter noted that her mother smiled and laughed more as she did not have worry about her dentures flying out. Mostly her daughter said that she was *so delighted* that her mother could have the last few years being comfortable, eating healthy, and being happy again!

Comments from Actual Patients...

- My mother put up with ill-fitting dentures for years. It was the bane of her life and I did not want to repeat the pattern. I am fortunate to have had the option of Dental Implants.
Brenda
- Wearing uncomfortable dentures did nothing for my self esteem. I had nightmares about them slipping out in the middle of a business lunch because my concentration had slipped whilst I was eating. The worst part was taking them out every night. I looked so awful and it made me feel old before my time. Hiding my mouth behind my beard did little to bring back my self respect.
- I now have multiple implants which retain my new dentures. They don’t feel like dentures because they are a part of me. They are not something I wear. This feels natural and the pride in my appearance is restored, both inside and out. Alice
- My teeth are now a natural part of me and not something I take out at night and soak in a glass. Dental Implants gave me a second chance, and this time I really will look after my teeth. **Clive**

Please visit www.LiveWithoutDentures.com or contact our office at 630-858-8800 for further information. We’re here to help!

About Dr. Thomas Gibbs:

Dr. Thomas Gibbs has over 28 years of experience in esthetic and cosmetic dentistry. He is one of the earliest members (1988) of the American Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry.

Dr. Gibbs has taken advanced training at some of the most prestigious dental institutes in the world, including the L.D. Panky Institute for Advanced Education, the California Implant Institute, the Misch International Implant Institute, and the Las Vegas Institute for Advanced Dental Studies (LVI). Dr. Gibbs has also earned honorary fellowships in the Academy of General Dentistry (FAGD), and the International Congress of Oral Implantologists (FICOI.)

Dr. Gibbs is also a member of the American Dental Association, the Illinois State Dental Society, the Chicago Dental Society, the Academy of General Dentistry, the International

Congress of Oral Implantologists, the American Dental Society of Anesthesiology, and the Dental Organization for Conscious Sedation.