

Dental implant

Maxillofacial Department



Patient information leaflet

What is a dental implant?

It is the insertion of a special metal cylinder screw under the gum in the jawbone. The implant is made of titanium and is strong, lightweight and bonds well to bone. A single implant can be used to attach a single crown of a tooth. To replace a larger number of teeth up to 4 to 5 implants might be used to support either a bridge or the implants can be joined by a bar that allows a removable overdenture to be securely clipped.

What happens next?

Your implant treatment will take place in stages. You can expect to take up to 8 months from the insertion of the implant, healing and bonding, to the final fitting of the false crown, teeth or denture.

Planning Stage

The dentist will check your general health and the condition of your mouth. You will have X-rays taken and models made. These will show whether you have enough bone in the jaw for the implants and where they will need to be placed.

First Stage surgery

This is usually carried out under a local anaesthetic where the mouth and gum is numbed with an injection. The gum will be cut and a special drill used to gently insert the implant into the correct position. This will be painless but you will feel the vibrations. A protective cover is attached to each implant and then the gum is sutured together using dissolvable stitches. These come out by themselves after two weeks. It should be possible to adjust your old denture or bridge so that you can wear it straightaway. There will be some swelling and discomfort for a few days and you will need to take some painkilling tablets and antibiotic tablets.

Under certain circumstances, a healing abutment will be connected at the time of the First Stage surgery to bring the implant through the gum. If this can be done, it will not be necessary to have Second Stage surgery.

Healing Stage

It will take up to six months for your mouth to heal and for the bone-implant union to be strong enough to support the prosthetic teeth.

Second Stage surgery

This is also done under a local anaesthetic. A small cut is made in the gum to expose the implant. If the implant is secure and the bone looks healthy the protective cover is removed and a different temporary cap is attached which is visible above the gum line. The gum is then stitched back into place around the implant.

Single Stage treatment

In some cases it may be possible to attach the healing abutment when the implant is inserted. This will depend on the quality of bone in the jaw and if dentures allow.

Prosthetic Stage

About 3-4 weeks later work will start to provide you with your new crown, bridge or overdenture. The number of visits will depend on the type of restoration you need but you can expect to attend at least three times.

Maintenance Stage

Once the implant treatment is completed you will be given advice on caring for your mouth and teeth. You will be asked to return for check ups for maintenance and adjustments.

Do implants always work?

Usually yes. If the implant does not bond with the jawbone then it will have to be removed. If that does happen it may be possible to repeat the procedure and place another implant. Smoking increases the chance of rejection!

What if the implant is rejected?

The titanium implant usually bonds well with bone but sometimes it does not. The risk of rejection is higher in those who smoke and also, possibly, in diabetic patients. If the implant does not bond then it will have to be removed. It may be possible to repeat the procedure and place another implant at a later date.

Is the implant permanent?

Usually yes. The success rate is about 90% in the upper jaw and 95% in the lower jaw.

Does the treatment hurt?

Once the implant has settled it should not hurt but after the two operations you can expect some discomfort until the mouth has healed. Simple painkillers will control the pain. There may also be some discomfort during the prosthetic stage when you attend for fittings but this will not last for long.

Will I have to go without teeth?

No, usually each stage in the treatment can be adapted around old dentures and dental plates. If it is necessary you will be warned beforehand and it will only be for a short time.

Will the implant be the same as my old teeth?

To begin with they can feel very different. It takes time to get used to the feel of the new teeth and their function. Once they have settled in they will feel just as comfortable as the old teeth and probably better.

Will other people see the implant?

No, the metal part is hidden under the gum. Every care is taken to match the colour of new teeth to your own teeth and to make them look as natural as possible.

Do implants need any special care?

Yes, they need to be maintained properly to prevent discomfort. It is most important to keep them very clean. You will be given advice on how to do this and on the use of floss and special brushes.

Are there any side effects?

Nerve damage: this is very rare but it can occur when work is done in the back area of the bottom jaw and could result in a permanent numbness of part of the lip.

Infection: you will be given advice on keeping the implant area clean. The dentist may prescribe antibiotics.

Any complaints or comments?

If you have any problems or comments on the service provided please contact the doctor or nurses straight away on the telephone number on the back of this sheet.

Or write to:

Maxillofacial Department

Royal Surrey County Hospital
Egerton Road
Guildford
Surrey GU2 7XX

Additional information

- www.dentalimplant.co.uk

References

- www.adi.org.uk/public/implant/index.htm

Contact details

For further information or advice please contact us.

Maxillofacial Outpatients

Telephone: 01483 406775 (Monday–Friday, 9am–4.30pm)

Outside these hours or in case of an emergency call **01483 571122** and ask for the on-call Maxillofacial doctor.

Operation queries/changes

If you need to cancel your operation or for queries regarding your date of operation contact the **Admissions Office** direct on **01483 402734**.

PALS and Advocacy contact details

Contact details of independent advocacy services can be provided by our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) who are located on the right hand side as you enter the main reception area. PALS are also your first point of contact for health related issues, questions or concerns surrounding RSCH patient services.

Telephone: 01483 402757

Email: rsc-tr.pals@nhs.net

Opening hours: 9.00am–3.00pm, Monday to Friday

If you would like information documents in large print, on tape or in another language or form please contact PALS.

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