



Dentistry has come a long way since wooden dentures were used to replace George Washington's teeth! Nowadays, when you are missing one or more teeth, there are a variety of methods to replace them, including removable appliances, fixed bridges and implants. Your CDA member dentist will discuss your options with you and help you decide the method that is best for you.

What are implants?

Implants have been around for many years and have gained wider and wider acceptance over time as they have proved a successful method for replacing missing teeth. They offer a way to have artificial teeth that look natural and feel secure.

The implant itself, often made of titanium, is used like an artificial root to support the false tooth or teeth. The dental surgeon, usually a periodontist (gum specialist) or an oral surgeon, places the implant into a hole made in the jawbone. A post can then be secured to this "artificial root" and can be used to secure a prosthetic device, such as a crown or bridge, above the gum. Implants can also be used in conjunction with a removable denture to create a more secure and stable base for the denture.

Why implants?

Implants have some advantages over removable dentures. Because removable dentures are not permanently fixed in place, they can move around when you eat and speak. Additionally, over time the bone that supports the denture changes and shrinks, making it increasingly difficult to support a denture comfortably.

Implants also have some advantages over fixed bridges, especially when the teeth adjacent to the missing tooth or teeth are healthy. In order to create a fixed bridge, your CDA member dentist must usually place crowns on these adjacent teeth – as they are the support for the replacement tooth or teeth. If these teeth are free from decay and existing restorations, you may prefer to leave them in their natural state, rather than alter them to hold the necessary supporting restorations. Implants replace the missing tooth or teeth while leaving all adjacent teeth unaltered.

How successful are implants?

While implants are highly successful, the likelihood of success depends on several factors. The amount of bone available to support the implant, the patient's health, whether or not the patient smokes and the quality of ongoing home care all effect long-term success.

Remember, replacing missing teeth is important to maintaining good dental health. Your CDA member dentist will evaluate the conditions in your mouth and help you decide if you are a good candidate for implants.