

Q. I had two permanent teeth removed when I was in my late twenties—I couldn't afford to fix them. Now I want to replace those teeth and I've heard a little about dental implants. Exactly what are implants? Do they last? Is it a painful procedure?

A. Dental implants are a wonderful solution for you. They can replace a single missing tooth or several missing teeth. They can also be used to anchor a full denture. The actual implant is a small titanium post which is inserted in the bone like a new root. While it is healing (for several months) we can attach a temporary crown for esthetics. After healing, we design a beautiful permanent crown, customized to match your natural enamel, tooth size and shape. Does this sound like “space age” dentistry? Actually, dental implants were invented in 1952 and have emerged to be the most predictable and non-invasive way to replace missing teeth.

Patients often ask if it hurts to have a dental implant placed. There can be some mild discomfort for a couple days, much like after an extraction. Here's another cool fact: a dental implant can often be placed during the same appointment as an extraction. It's convenient, efficient and literally gives your tooth back in a way that feels just like the natural one. As always your restorative choice depends largely on the condition of the surrounding teeth and the health of your bone. Ask your dentist how dental implants might help you feel whole again!