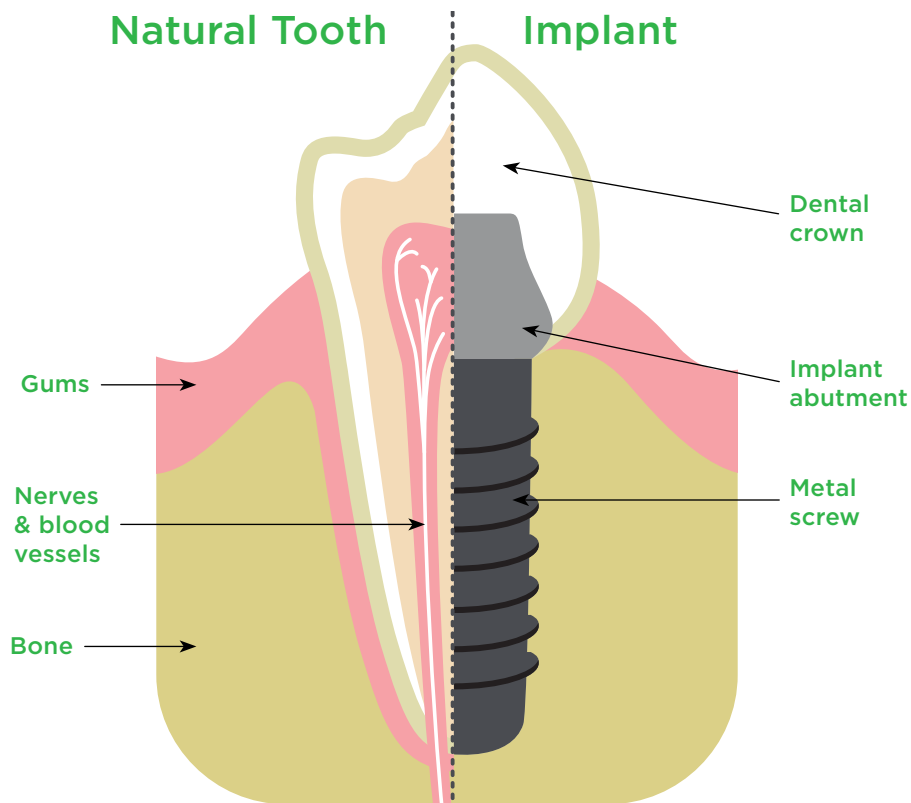




Dental Implant

What it is:

A dental implant is an artificial tooth root placed into your jawbone to hold a replacement tooth or bridge. These are used to replace one or more missing teeth in the upper or lower jaw.



Why you would get one:

If you need to replace one or more teeth and have healthy gums and good overall health, you are likely a strong candidate for an implant instead of a denture or bridge.

Implants have advantages over the more traditional options in that they do not require the surrounding teeth for support (like a fixed bridge), nor do they have to be removed for cleaning (like removable dentures).

How it works:

Step 1

Your dentist will decide where to place the root implant and how to shape it. There are a number of techniques your dentist might use, including computed tomography (CT) scans, which take X-ray images that are used to create 3D images to help dentists determine implant placement.

Step 2

Once your dentist has decided on placement and shape, the unhealthy tooth (if still present) will be extracted (Fig. A). Your gums will then need to heal for four to eight weeks.



Fig. A

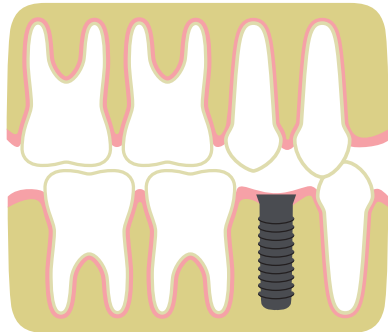


Fig. B

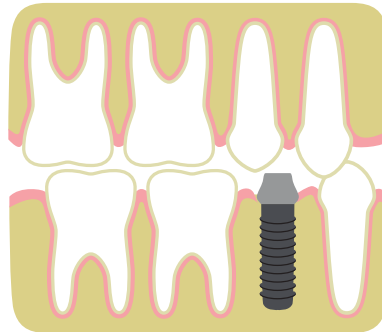


Fig. C

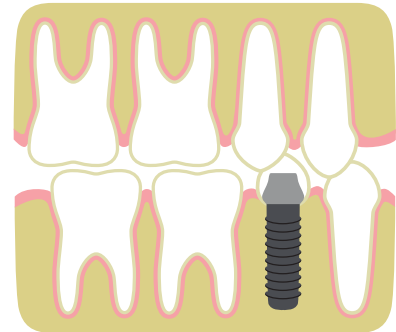


Fig. D

Step 3

When all tissues have healed, your dentist will surgically insert the implant, a titanium metal screw (Fig. B), into your jawbone where your tooth previously was. This screw acts as a substitute for the tooth root and forms the base for the replacement. You may receive a few self-dissolving stitches to help the healing process.

Step 4

Most often, the implant is left to heal under the gums for up to six months before it's "uncovered" in the next surgical procedure.

Step 5

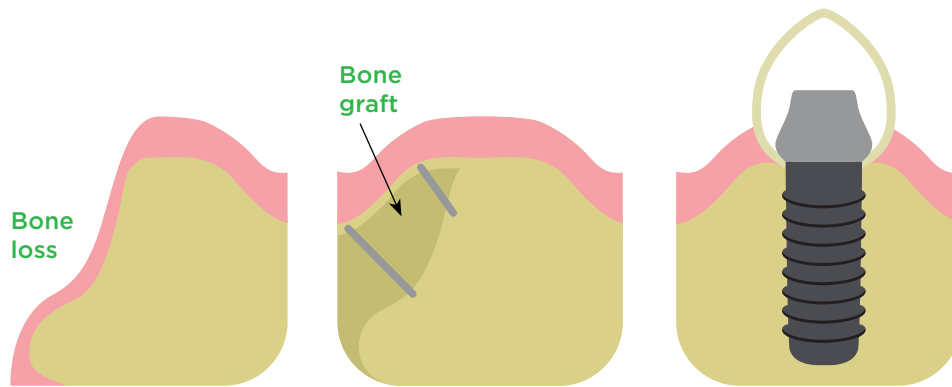
In the next surgery, a small metal post (Fig. C) that sticks up above the gums will be attached to the implant.

Step 6

After a two- to four-week healing process, the replacement tooth (Fig. D) is attached to the metal post.

Step 7

Your dentist will likely recommend that you avoid using straws and stick to soft foods for at least 24 hours after surgery. Depending on how extensive the surgery is, your dentist will either prescribe pain medication or suggest over-the-counter pain relief.



If there's not enough bone structure to support your dental implant, your dentist may need to perform a bone graft before placing your implant. This will require another healing period, which can take up to nine months. Bone grafting material comes from two sources:

Autograft bone is material taken by removing a small piece of bone from another part of your body and transplanting it into the desired spot in the jawbone. Autografts contain your own cells, and carry no risk of disease transmission. The drawback: It requires an additional surgical procedure and bone that may not be easily available.

Allograft bone is material taken from an organ donor and processed to ensure its safety and improve the handling characteristics. The advantages of allograft bone are that it is readily available and does not require a second surgical site. Allograft bone has been well documented in clinical trials and has an excellent safety record.

Worth noting:

Depending on your individual situation, including your needs and health, your dentist may expedite the implant process by inserting the implant and the post at the same time. In this case, the implant is placed immediately after tooth extraction, or the replacement tooth is attached to the implant immediately after surgery.



If you have any questions about what your dental plan covers, talk with your dentist or visit [DeltaDentalAZ.com](https://www.DeltaDentalAZ.com) and sign in to view your benefits information.

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