



Patient Information Leaflet **Implant Surgery**

Cork University Dental
School & Hospital



This leaflet has been designed to explain implant surgery and it contains answers to many frequently asked questions. If you have any other questions that the leaflet does not answer, or if you would like further information, please ask us.

What is an implant?

An implant is a false metal root, usually made of titanium, which is screwed into your jawbone. Implants act as anchors for crowns, bridges or denture attachments.

What are the benefits?

Dental implants can be very useful where bridging the gap in your teeth would otherwise mean having to cut down and crown (cap) healthy teeth. They are also very useful where a denture or bridge would be difficult or impossible because there are no suitable teeth or gums for support.

What does implant surgery involve?

Implant surgery is usually done under local anaesthetic - an injection in your mouth to make it completely numb. Some nervous patients have sedation to help them to relax. Your surgeon will discuss this option with you and see it if it is suitable for you. It may be necessary to do the surgery under general anaesthetic (completely asleep).

When your mouth is numb a cut is made in your gum and it is lifted back to uncover the bone underneath. A hole is then made in the bone using a drill and the implant is screwed into this hole. Your gum is then put back in the correct place with stitches. These stitches are usually dissolvable but they may take several weeks to disappear.

The implant will be left alone to heal for approximately 4-6 months.

Normally, a second, smaller surgery will then be carried out. A small cut is made in the gum over the implant to place an extension on the implant. This extension will show above your gum and allow your gum to heal around it. This is done to prepare the implant and the gum for the next stage - the crown, bridge or denture that your restorative dentist is making.

Can anybody have implants?

No. In order to put in an implant there must be enough bone to hold it securely. Some people do not have enough good quality bone for this purpose. It may be possible to transplant new bone to your jaw to allow you to have implants. If you are a smoker, have severe gum disease or have certain medical conditions it may not be possible for you to have implants. Your surgeon will discuss this with you and explain the reasons.

What are the risks?

As with all surgery there is a risk of pain, swelling, bruising, bleeding and infection.

Other risks include -

- In the lower jaw, nerves in the area may be bruised when an implant is placed. This can cause tingling, numbness or pain in your lip, chin or tongue. Very rarely it can cause loss of the sensation of taste on that side. The risk of these nerves being bruised depends on exactly where your implant is going to be placed and how much bone there is around the nerves. Your surgeon will tell you what the risk is for you. Sensation generally returns to normal but this can take many months. For some people the change in sensation is permanent.
- In the upper jaw there may be damage to the sinus cavity near your nose. Your surgeon will tell you if this is likely to happen.
- Infection and/or failure of the implant. You will be prescribed antibiotics and an antiseptic mouthwash following the surgery. The risk of failure is higher in certain individuals, particularly those who smoke. You will be advised if we think the risk of failure is higher than normal in your case.
- Your denture may not fit as well following the surgery.

What can I expect after the operation?

You will have some **pain** and **swelling**. This is usually at its worst in the first few days but it may take a couple of weeks to disappear completely. You will get a prescription for painkillers to take regularly after the surgery.

It is important to keep your mouth as **clean** as possible for the first few weeks after surgery in order to prevent infection. You should brush your teeth gently but thoroughly. It may be difficult to clean around the surgical site because it is sore. You can clean this area after eating by gently rinsing your mouth with the mouthwash your surgeon has recommended. You can also use warm salt water, (dissolve a teaspoon of kitchen salt in a cup of warm water) starting on the day after surgery.

Will I need to take time off?

You may need to stay at home for a day or so depending on the type of job you have. If lots of implants have been placed and you have had intravenous sedation or a general anaesthetic then it is important to remember that you cannot drive or operate machinery for 24 hours after intravenous sedation and for 48 hours after a general anaesthetic.

This leaflet is available online at <http://www.ucc.ie/en/dentalschool/patients>