

## If you are missing one or more teeth, there are plenty of reasons to correct the problem:

- A gap between your teeth, if obvious when you smile or speak, is a cosmetic concern.
- Missing teeth may affect your speech.
- Missing a molar might not be noticeable when you talk or smile, but its absence can affect chewing.
- When a tooth is removed, the biting force on the remaining teeth begins to change. To compensate for the lost tooth, there is a risk of extra pressure and discomfort on the jaw joints.
- If a missing tooth is not replaced, the surrounding teeth can shift. Harmful plaque and tartar can collect in new hard-to-reach places created by the shifting teeth. Over time, this may lead to tooth decay and periodontal disease.
- Bone loss can occur in the region of the missing tooth.

## Who is a candidate?

If you are in good general health, with healthy gums and a jawbone that can support an implant, this treatment may be an option for you. In fact, your health is more of a factor than your age. Chronic illnesses, such as diabetes or leukemia, may interfere with healing after surgery. And if you use tobacco, you are at greater risk for gum disease, which can weaken the bone and tissues needed to support the implant.

Meticulous oral hygiene is critical to the success of the implant. You'll need to spend a little more time caring for the implant and making sure the area surrounding it is particularly clean. If your overall health is good and your teeth and gums are in good shape, your dentist can determine if you are a suitable candidate for a dental implant.

## Other Considerations

Most patients find that an implant is secure and stable — a good replacement for their own tooth. Implants, however, are not an option for everyone. Because implants require surgery, patients should be in good health overall and have healthy gums. And, patients either must have adequate bone to support the implant, or be good candidates for surgery to build up the area needing the implant.

The treatment time for dental implants is longer and the cost higher than that of alternative procedures. Regular dental visits are essential to the life and long-term success of your implant. Some patients are scheduled for professional cleanings two to four times per year. Your dentist will provide you with a dental recall program to ensure the health of your implant and your natural teeth.

Your dentist also will suggest a home-care routine to suit your needs, which will include brushing twice a day and flossing once a day. You may also be advised to use a special toothbrush, an interproximal brush, or a mouth rinse to help prevent cavities and periodontal disease.