

How to find a trustworthy doctor for a dental implant

Your smile is one of your greatest personal assets. If you're looking for a way to replace missing teeth and restore your beautiful smile, implants are a terrific solution. Regardless of which tooth (or teeth) you lost, implants can be a great way to create natural-looking replacements that are customized to you.



Vietnam granny with the playful spirit of a child.
Photography by Heward Jue

The most important step in getting a dental implant is finding a doctor who's right for you. It's equally important that you find a doctor who will help you understand the process and what to expect along the way. [Dr. Wen Fan](#), an oral surgeon practicing in Silicon Valley, provides answers to some of the most frequently asked questions on dental implants:

Who do I go to?

Dental implants typically involve two doctors: your general dentist and an oral surgeon. The surgeon removes the non-restorable tooth (if necessary) and places the dental implant. Your general dentist places the dental crown on the dental implant to make sure it has appropriate esthetic form and function.

The best way to find a surgeon is to have your dentist recommend a Board Certified Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeon or find one through the [American Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons](#).

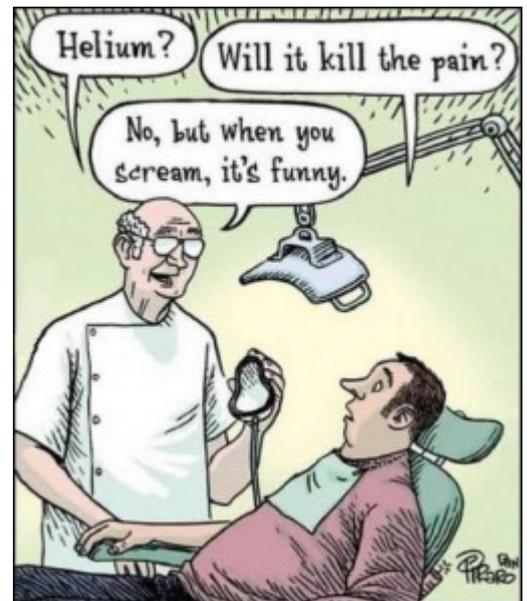
How long does it take?

Typically, the oral surgeon will first remove the bad tooth and place a bone graft. The bone graft helps to strengthen the area so that your dental implant will be secure. The average bone healing time is about 3-6 months. After the bone has healed, the oral surgeon can do the dental implant. The newly placed dental implant will need 3-6 months to integrate or “fuse” to the bone. Once this is complete, you go back to your general dentist for the crown.

Can I get a “tooth in a day?”

In some cases, dental implants can be placed at the same time as removing the bad tooth. This is considered an “immediate” implant. For front teeth that affect your smile, temporary crowns can sometimes also be immediately attached to the dental implant as well. This technique works very well in the right situations. This type of temporary crown is short-lived and needs to be replaced with a permanent crown once the implant has integrated. Be aware that this technique should only be used in very specific situations.

Is it painful?



Most people have some mild soreness for a few days after the tooth is pulled, but most surgeons prescribe some pain medications to help ease the discomfort.

Surprisingly, most people have less discomfort after the dental implant placement than their initial extraction. Most patients will have some mild soreness for 1-2 days that is relieved with over the counter pain medications such as ibuprofen.

How long do dental implants last?

Everyone's biology is different so there is not guarantee on the longevity of dental implants, but many believe that a healthy dental implant will last a lifetime. Since our current form of dental implants was not introduced until the early 1980's, there really isn't enough data to make a blanket statement that implants last a lifetime. A lifetime can be 20 more years for some, but 50 or more years for others. We do have good data that shows healthy implants can last 20-30 years, but will they last longer? Probably, but we just don't have good long term studies yet.

What should I watch out for?

If you feel that the doctor is pressuring you to get an

implant . . . be wary. Successful, established and experienced surgeons love providing their patients with dental implant care, but never pressure them. Choose a doctor who takes the time to educate you and allow you to make an informed decision. Make sure you find surgeon who's willing to take the time to communicate and allow you to digest the information.

Be wary of dentists (non-surgeons) who claim to have "implant certificates" or "special training" in implants. These "implant training certificates" or special implant training are not recognized by the American Dental Association, and often times consist of a few weekend classes that practice on an animal jaws in a classroom. Your best bet is to seek out a Board Certified Surgeon.

Be wary of any doctor who tells you that implants are free of complications or that they have not personally had complications. Any surgeon that works with implants routinely will have complications. Granted the complications may not be significant, but they do happen from time to time.

Be aware of discount pricing that's routinely advertised. Practitioners who offer discount prices may be using knock-off or generic implants. These lesser brands have issues with quality control and long term stability. Find out if the surgeon is using a reputable implant system. The three most popular and reputable implants are: [Nobel Biocare](#), [Straumann](#) and [BIOMET 3i](#).

Dental implants are an investment in both your health and appearance. If you don't feel quite right or comfortable with your surgeon for any reason, get a second opinion. Not all patient-doctor relationships are a good fit, so there is no need to force it. Before making your final decision, you may also want to check for reviews on Yelp or other sites specifically designed for doctor reviews.

[**Why we need to do doctor reviews on our last doctor visits**](#)

A patient sat in a dental chair with a broken front tooth. After discussing the restoration procedure, the patient said, "Before we begin Doc, I gotta know if I'll be able to play the trumpet when you're finished?" "Of course you will," the dentist said. "Great! I couldn't play a note before." [Dental India](#)



Wen S. Fan,
DMD, MD

[Dr. Wen Fan](#) obtained his DMD from [Harvard School of Dental Medicine](#) and his MD from the [David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA](#). He has special interest and expertise in the field of dental implant surgery, orthognathic/corrective jaw surgery and pathology. He practices in both San Jose and Cupertino, CA. He's fluent in both English and Mandarin Chinese. He's also a diplomate on the [American Board of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery](#).

[When's the last time you did a check up on your dentist?](#)

