



ASK FOR IMPLANTS

A winning smile makes a pleasant appearance, but more importantly, it promotes self-esteem which is critical to social and career success. What would you do then, if you have missing teeth due to less than meticulous care over the years? Specialist Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeon *Dr Juliet Tay* has the solution.

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Dental implants have revolutionized dentistry by changing the way we replace missing teeth. Unlike traditional restorative procedures like bridges and dentures, dental implants do not compromise the esthetics, function, or integrity of remaining natural teeth. They are superior to previously established treatment options for replacing missing teeth. Implant dentistry has enhanced our patients' expectations regarding dental care and has improved the quality of life for millions of people across the world.

Up to five years ago, I would recommend dental implants to patients and there would be very few patients who would take up treatment, opting instead for dentures or bridges. Today, patients come in asking for more information on dental implants and often refer to friends or family members who have had dental implants placed. After I explain the advantages of dental implants and the disadvantage of cutting down good teeth for bridges, they usually insist on the dental implant option.

1 WHAT IS A DENTAL IMPLANT?

A dental implant is a sophisticated titanium screw that replaces the root portion of a missing natural tooth. The implant is placed in the bone of the upper or lower jaw, allowed to bond with the bone, and would serve as an anchor for the replacement teeth. These replacement teeth look, feel and function exactly like natural teeth. This is one time that the clinician can make something for a patient that is as good as the original. Dental implants, if taken care of, can last a lifetime.

The procedure consists of a 20-minute surgery. During this procedure, local anesthetic is administered and a gum flap raised to allow access to the underlying bone. The bone is then gently prepared with a series of drills which create a channel for the implant to be inserted. A period of 10 to 12 weeks is necessary

to allow the bone to fuse to the implant. Once this period is completed, the fixture is ready for the crown to be fitted. The surgery is often perceived to be a painful procedure. In reality, it is even less painful than extracting a tooth.

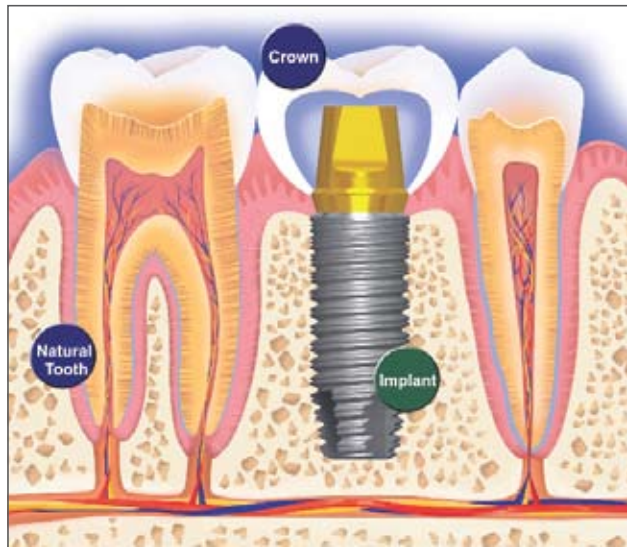
2 DENTAL IMPLANTS DISCOVERY

The discovery of dental implants is credited to Professor

Per-Ingvar Branemark, who strangely enough, was a Swedish orthopedic surgeon. He was researching bone healing in animal and discovered that when titanium was implanted in bone, the two substances fused predictably, safely and securely. Branemark's discovery took place in 1952 during vital microscopy studies in rabbits. He then developed and tested a type of dental implant utilizing pure titanium screws, which he termed fixtures. From this revolutionary discovery, known as "osseointegration", grew the concept of dental implants. In 1965 Branemark, placed the first titanium dental implant into a human volunteer, a Swede named Gosta Larsson. With his pioneering research, Branemark created an opportunity for renewed comfort and self-confidence among millions of individuals facing the frustration and embarrassment of tooth loss. Gosta Larsson died in 2005 with his dental implants still intact and fully functioning.

3 BENEFITS OF DENTAL IMPLANT

Once your teeth have been extracted, bone loss begins as there is no stimulation



to the underlying bone structure. This process is known as disuse atrophy. Dental implants can halt this process and prevent the collapse and aging of your lower face. Unlike bridges, which require adjacent teeth to be trimmed and which need to be replaced every 10 to 15 years, dental implants can last a lifetime if they well taken care of.

Dentures are not stable and tend to move during function. They interfere with speech and also cover the palate. Their biting efficiency is only about 20% that of natural teeth and many denture wearers find chewing food,

especially meat, a great problem. Dental implants overcome these problems. I also observe that following treatment, patients often find renewed confidence and an improved sense of self-esteem.

I have not had any patient regret going through the treatment, although a few have lamented on its cost. At the end of the day, most agree that it is money well spent.

One such example is Mr Soh KC. He tolerated a denture for over 12 years. He found that his dentures were socially crippling. He could not enjoy functions with friends as he feared his dentures would fall out while eating. Finally, with encouragement from his family, he had 11 implants placed and restored over a period of six months. When the treatment was completed, Mr Soh brought his family for a meal at Morton's Steakhouse. "Previously I could not enjoy my steak. Now, I can tell you without hesitation that this is one of the best meals I have had in the past decade!" said Mr Soh.



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Dr Juliet Tay is the Director of The Implant and Oral Surgery Centre with over 10 years of clinical experience. She is a fully qualified specialist registered with the Singapore Dental Council and holds a position at the National University of Singapore as an Adjunct Lecturer. Her expertise includes full mouth reconstruction with dental implants and smile makeovers.

Dr Tay lectures extensively on the topic of dental implantology and has published in international journals. She has also co-authored a book "A Patients' Guide to Dental Implants." Dr Tay is fully accredited and has been granted operating privileges at major private hospitals in Singapore including Gleneagles Hospital, Mount Elizabeth Hospital and Raffles Hospital.

Dr Tay is currently practising at Camden Medical Centre.

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