

14 things you should know about dental implants

Implants are a reliable and natural-looking way to replace missing teeth. When done correctly they can last a lifetime, but they can create more problems than they solve if not. If you are considering dental implants, then allow me to provide you with all you need to know about the process, staying safe, and address any questions you may have!

There are many trust-worthy dentists, such as myself, who provide an excellent quality of dentistry and dental implant surgery that will be functioning perfectly for years to come. Unfortunately, not all dentists have the same amount of dedication or experience to provide you with the best care.

Some dentists provide poor quality treatment, do not plan ahead, lack experience or are simply lazy, and take advantage of patients who may not be aware of the risks. All patients considering dental implants should be well-informed and confident in their surgeon, so you can receive safe treatment by an expert such as myself with almost 20 years of experience in providing dental implant treatments from simple single teeth to complex full mouth rebuilds.

Dr Colin Sutton



Is it better to leave the gap?

Some patients feel that gaps in their teeth can be unsightly or embarrassing, so natural-looking dental implants are the ideal substitute for these missing teeth. They are far superior in many ways to dentures, bridges, and better than an empty space. In fact, some patients find them preferable to their natural teeth! The ideal time to have an implant placed is typically around 4 to 5 weeks after the tooth has been removed. After this time the surrounding teeth can start to move around, decay, and pave the way for gum disease to take effect. The bone in the area of the gap will also gradually disappear, making it harder and more expensive to restore the space satisfactorily.

If you have been considering dental implants but haven't had chance to ask the right questions, here is an informative guide that I think all patients should know before making their decision:

1. Who has made the implant?

There are hundreds of dental implant manufacturers now. Provided your dentist uses a tried and tested system then you should have years of trouble free service from your implant. If things go wrong in the future then spare parts are always available for the bigger well-established implant companies such as Adin, Nobel Biocare and Straumann who's products I use.

2. Do your implants have a guarantee?

Ask what guarantee your implants have. It may be worth taking out an insurance policy to help cover any costs incurred should something unfortunate happen. Implants occasionally fail in the first couple of months of placement. After that provided you look after your implants and attend any recommended review appointments and hygiene visits, then implant failure is rare.

3. What is your surgeon's training and experience?

You may be surprised to know that a dentist can buy surgical

kit and perform dental implant surgery without any training. Be sure the dentist placing your implant is suitably experienced and fully qualified, so you can remain safe and confident during your procedure. A long row of fancy letters after your dentist name does not always equate to experience and success.

4. What is your restorative dentist's training and experience?

Your dental implant will come in two parts: the implant and the restoration. The implant itself sits in the bone to provide a solid foundation, and the restoration is then fixed on top and is typically a crown, bridge or denture. If the person fixing the restoration is not the person who placed the implant, make sure they have relevant training and experience to secure the best outcome. Also if things go wrong who puts it right, the person who placed the implant or the person who fitted the restoration? If the implant dentist is a visiting dentist, then what happens if you have problems on the days or weeks that they are not there? Who will take responsibility for your implant treatment if the visiting dentist decides to stop visiting?

5. Can my surgeon also perform my restoration?

Personally, I feel that the best outcomes are generally achieved when the person placing the implant is also the person fixing the restoration. This way we can be sure that the implant is placed precisely where it needs to be for a great, healthy, natural looking result, not where it may have been easiest and quickest.

6. What is your technician's training and experience?

Your restoration is made by a technician, so it is equally as important to be assured that your technician is just as qualified and experienced as your surgeon. It's worth asking your dentist about the technician's experience.

7. What is your surgeon's equipment like?

Has your dentist invested in the necessary equipment to provide a high level of implant care? Don't be fooled – all dentists will have a basic surgical drill, but do they have the equipment that shows that they are serious about offering the best implant service possible such as a Piezo Surgical Unit, Digital intraoral Scanner and a CBCT scanner? This kind of equipment can signify a dentist that takes pride in their implant dentistry, their investment being as important as their qualifications. In addition, a CT scan will help make the treatment quicker, more predictable and safer.

8. Is it sterilised and safe?

Avoid a dentist that cuts corners and performs lazily. If they are not turning their surgery into a sterilised, clean, and safe environment like a mini operating theatre to carry out dental implant placement, then you may be compromising your dental health and the success of your treatment.

9. Can they avoid or handle complications?

Implants are great because they have a very high success rate, but if a problem does arise and your dentist has no experience in rectifying complications you may be in trouble. You should always choose a dentist that has a high success rate and is capable of managing risk. We are happy to advise that our implant success rate is in excess of 99% since my first implant treatments in 2000.

10. Is your surgeon a 'specialist'?

Please be aware of those who claim that they are a 'specialist' or 'implantologist', because there is no such classification in the UK! Do not trust a dentist who claims this, they may be underqualified and attempting to mask it. Ask them instead how many implants they have successfully placed and ask to see examples of their work.

11. Does your surgeon have bone grafting experience?

Sometimes no matter how much we plan and prepare; certain things just cannot be anticipated and what we find at the time of surgery may not be as expected. The most common complication is there may be an inadequate amount of bone, which qualified and experienced dentists such as myself can overcome. If you have had a CT scan then you would already have been informed of the need for bone grafting which is surprisingly common.



12. Have they taken your medical considerations and the condition of your remaining teeth into account?

When placing implants, we are manipulating the bone's natural healing processes to our advantage. A full medical history will be taken prior to treatment and surgery as certain medical conditions will influence the healing process. One of the biggest problems I see is that of untreated gum disease. A quick polish by the hygienist every 6 months will not cure this and if not treated then your implants are highly likely to fail.

13. Can it be done on the cheap?

Yes, but is it recommended or even safe? There is a saying, "You get what you pay for". The skill of your dentist, their qualifications and training, equipment, laboratory and preparation are all incurred in the price of your treatment. If a dentist is performing your treatment for a fraction of the price, then you can expect that to reflect in the results. Corners are being cut somewhere.

14. Thinking about going over-seas?

There are many overseas opportunities for having implants, and NONE of us should take them. I really cannot emphasise enough that the potential cost savings are far outweighed by the higher complication rate and your compromised safety. When things go wrong and you need to take additional days off work to fly back at short notice to get them sorted, then the costs soon start to mount up. Are you prepared to gamble with your health?

Make sure you receive the quality of care you deserve.

Take into consideration everything advised here, and no doubt you will receive excellent quality of care. There are many respected dentists who will only provide successful high quality dental implant treatment after a detailed full dental assessment, one of those being myself.

Here at the Dental Health & Implant Centre, we take pride in our dental surgery and practise. We offer high quality implant treatment and patient care for a sensible fee, as well as professional and experienced hands. If you are considering dental implants and are looking for an expert who can confidently answer these questions, then let us provide the care you deserve.