



One of the best ways to replace a missing tooth is with a dental implant. However, it is important to fully understand the procedure and TRICARE Dental Program (TDP) coverage before you start the process.

Dental implants are a time-tested option for replacing missing teeth and, according to the American Dental Association (ADA), an implant is the closest option to a natural tooth. Along with looking natural, dental implants offer several other benefits.

"Utilizing a dental implant can preserve and maintain the integrity of surrounding teeth", explains Dr. Robert Mitton, TRICARE Dental Care Branch Chief. "Unlike other treatment options, like a three-unit bridge, teeth adjacent to a dental implant can remain untouched if they are healthy."

"While they look more natural than a denture or a partial, dental implants also have the advantages of stabilizing the bite and being able to replace just one tooth," Mitton adds.

### LONG-TERM COMMITMENT

A dental implant consists of the implant - or anchor - which is surgically anchored in your jaw, a post inserted into the anchor and a crown or other prosthetic device attached to the post to replace the tooth.

Receiving an implant is a three-part process that takes several months to complete. The steps include:

- Insertion of the implant in the jaw followed by a three to six-month period during which the implant fuses with the bone, a process called "osseointegration."
- Installation of the post followed by a period during which the gum tissue is allowed to heal around the post.
- Placement of the crown.

### COST CAN BE A FACTOR

Costs for implants vary, but it is very likely you will use your entire \$1,200 annual maximum dental benefit for a single implant. You are also responsible for a 50-percent cost-share for dental implants.

Because of the out-of-pocket expense for implants, United Concordia Companies, Inc. (United Concordia) recommends that you submit a request for predetermination of cost for both the implant placement and the crown or other prosthodontic service. The predetermination allows you and your dentist to know - prior to treatment - if the implant is covered and United Concordia's anticipated payment.

If you are a TDP enrollee living overseas, you must obtain a *Non-Availability and Referral From (NARF)* from your overseas military dental treatment facility or your TRICARE Area Office before receiving implant services from an overseas Host Nation Provider. Visit the TDP Web site at [www.TRICAREdentalprogram.com](http://www.TRICAREdentalprogram.com) for detailed information and requirements regarding implants and *NARFs* for overseas enrollees.

### IS AN IMPLANT RIGHT FOR YOU?

It is important to keep in mind that a dental implant is just one of several treatment options for replacing a missing tooth. Your dentist may also recommend traditional tooth replacement with fixed bridges or removable prostheses, if appropriate. Speak with your dentist about all treatment options and the pros and cons associated with each before making a treatment decision.

**For more information on implants and TDP coverage, or to find more "Dental Health 101" tips, visit us online at [www.TRICAREdentalprogram.com](http://www.TRICAREdentalprogram.com)**