

Hygienists save implants

Implants can be a great way to replace missing teeth. However, like your natural teeth, dental implants need to be looked after carefully to maintain health and this involves both patient care and professional care.

At home, all plaque needs to be removed every day to prevent the development of inflammation of the gums around natural teeth and around implants. While most people are capable of achieving good plaque control, it is uncommon for tooth brushing to be perfect every day and the result of incomplete plaque removal is an inflammatory response in the gum designed to protect the tissues from the bacterial plaque and the bacteria's toxic waste products that can irritate the soft tissues of the gum.

This initial inflammatory response affects the soft tissue cuff around teeth and implants. We call this inflammation "gingivitis" when it is around teeth, and "peri-implant mucositis" when it is around an implant. This early stage inflammation can be considered a protective response of the body to avoid disease developing. It is confined only to the soft tissue of the gum and does not affect the bone surrounding the tooth or implant, and being non-destructive it can be resolved easily by re-introducing regular and effective plaque control.

Normally, a visit to the dental hygienist will provide the necessary instruction in plaque control and the opportunity for the hygienist to remove any bacterial deposits or hard deposits of tartar from between teeth and beneath the gum margins. This is necessary to enable a return to gum health.

However early stage protective inflammation has the potential to progress to the next stage in the development of periodontal (around natural teeth) and peri-implant (around a dental implant) inflammatory disease that is capable of destroying the bone that surrounds and supports the natural teeth and dental implants. This destructive stage of disease is called chronic periodontitis around teeth and peri-implantitis around implants.

For that reason it is extremely important that patients who have implants should see a dentist regularly so that the soft tissues can be carefully examined to identify this inflammation at the earliest possible time, and ideally well before it progresses to the later destructive stage of inflammatory disease.

Peri-implantitis is very common in those patients who have implants and who fail to follow up their implant therapy with regular professional maintenance through a dentist or dental hygienist. Over 50% of implants have been found to have such peri-implant inflammation in a number of dental health surveys carried out in several countries. However, those patients receiving regular care of their implants and who maintain a high standard of plaque control at home are more likely to avoid this condition and enjoy a trouble-free future with their implants and replacement teeth.

If you have dental implants make sure you have them checked regularly and see a suitably experienced dental hygienist who is used to working with implant patients at least every 6 months. It is far easier to keep implants healthy than it is to treat peri-implantitis or replace lost bone needed to support your implants.

Call NQ Surgical Dentistry to arrange for assessment of your implants on 07 4725 1656 or visit our website for more information or to make an online enquiry at www.nqsurgicaldentistry.com

