

Did you know that by age seventeen, more than **7%** of Americans are missing at least one permanent tooth, according to studies done by the U.S. Surgeon General. Many patients are unhappy with their missing tooth. They complain that they are afraid to smile and show the missing tooth. There are also many dental consequences such as a change in your bite, shifting teeth, and long term damage to the remaining teeth.

There are several available options to replace a missing tooth. Popular choices include implants and bridges. Each has its own positives and negatives and it is important to consider these carefully when deciding on your best treatment option.

Advantages of bridges are that there is no additional surgery required, and that they can usually be fabricated in 3-4 weeks. However, there are serious negative consequences associated with bridges. The abutments (side teeth) can get cavities, the teeth may require root canals, or the bridge may break. The average life span of a bridge is approximately 8 years. Even insurance companies recognize that bridges will need replacement every 5-7 years.

Implants offer the distinct advantage that each tooth stands alone. This greatly simplifies oral hygiene such as brushing and flossing. Also, in case an adjacent tooth gets a cavity, the whole bridge does not need to be removed. Implants have success rates of 97-98%. This means that in all likelihood, the implant will be successful. Implants do require regular cleaning and maintenance to prevent bone loss and infection. Implants may cost more than a bridge and also usually take 3-4 months before your crown can be made. Although implants are a little more involved than bridges, patients are happy that they have something that will probably last them for life with minimal problems in the future.

In summary, both bridges and implants are great options to replace missing teeth. With the high success of today's implants, implants are usually considered the treatment option of choice. When making your decision, consider these factors and see your dentist to discuss your individual situation. More information can be found on our website at www.MiamiPerioImplant.com