

OPEN SPACES NEXT TO DENTAL IMPLANT RESTORATIONS

A common complaint of having a Dental Implant, is the possibility of the development of an open space between the crowned implant and the adjacent natural tooth.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. *What are the causes of a space developing next to my Implant crown?*

As a result of eating, over a period of time wear occurs at the points where adjacent teeth touch, and as a consequence a flattening of the teeth happens in these areas. However, spaces do not occur, due to the ability of a tooth to drift and close any such space. An Implant though is fused to the bone, and therefore cannot move allowing a space to develop between the implant crown and the adjacent tooth.



Implant Crown on Molar-space developing

2. *What are the chances of a space developing next to my Implant crown?*

- There is about a 50% chance of a space developing next to your implant crown.
- A space may develop as early as 3 months after your implant has been restored and usually occurs on the front aspect of the implant restoration.
- A space is more likely to develop if your implant is in the lower jaw and replaces a back tooth.
- A space is more likely to develop if you have your own teeth in the opposing jaw rather than a partial or full denture.
- A space is more likely to develop in somebody who clenches or grinds their teeth, resulting in higher bite forces.



Space enlarging

3. *What are the consequences of a space developing next to my Implant crown?*

Having a space may lead to food trapping occurring between the natural tooth and the implant crown. However, as long as this space is kept clean, this may not prove to be a problem.

In other circumstances however, the trapped food may:

- Result in decay of the natural tooth which would require treatment
- Cause an infection resulting in deterioration of the gum and bone support of the natural tooth
- Cause an infection resulting in bone loss around the implant

Depending on the outcome of the infection, some dentists may elect to monitor the situation and treat accordingly whilst others may decide to treat earlier.

4. *What are the treatment options for a space developing next to my Implant crown?*

- Your implant should be monitored to see if a space is developing.
- The restoration on your implant should be designed so that it can be removed and modified if necessary to close the space.
- If an open space develops with no food trapping no treatment is required.
- If an open space develops with food trapping the first choice is to modify the implant restoration and the second choice to modify the tooth.
- If an open space develops with food trapping causing decay in the adjacent tooth it should be restored. Any bone loss around the natural tooth or implant should be treated.

5. *How can I prevent a space developing next to my Implant crown?*

The use of a retainer may help in preventing the tooth wear and movement which contribute to the possibility of a space developing.