

PLANNING FOR A MISSING TOOTH

Implants and Timing: Why We Wait

Some permanent teeth never form, and others are lost to injury. An implant is often the best long-term replacement, and on timing we're firm: do the right thing at the right time.

01 Why Implants Wait Until Adulthood

The timing

An implant fuses to the jawbone and stays exactly where it's placed, while natural teeth keep erupting slowly and the face keeps changing well into adulthood. Placed too early, an implant crown can end up higher than its neighbors, leave a visible step at the gumline, and trap food. Correcting that can mean a new crown, grafting, or a new implant, adding investment and affecting how the smile looks.

Our standard: no implants before age 25, and we prefer to wait until 30. The risk is highest in younger patients, people with a longer face shape, and anyone whose gumline shows when they smile.

02 Keep the Baby Tooth as Long as Possible

Protecting bone

When a permanent tooth is missing, the baby tooth in that spot has nothing pushing it out. A healthy baby tooth holds the space, and its roots keep the surrounding bone from shrinking. Once it's gone, the bone thins and grafting may be needed before an implant. Many of these baby teeth last into the 20s and beyond, and we check them at every visit for loosening, root changes, and sinking.

03 Bridging the Years

Interim options

Each case is different, and Dr. Cooke recommends the option that fits the tooth, the bite, and where growth stands.

Keep the Baby Tooth

Our first choice when the tooth is healthy. It holds the space and keeps the bone around it strong.

Maryland Bridge

A replacement tooth bonded to the backs of the neighboring teeth, with little to no reshaping of those teeth.

Retainer with a Tooth

A retainer that carries a replacement tooth and keeps the space open. Easy to update as growth continues.

04 Decoronation

When a tooth can't stay

Sometimes a baby tooth, or an injured permanent tooth, fuses to the bone (ankylosis). A fused tooth can't keep up with growth, so it sinks below its neighbors and holds back the bone around it, and removing it outright can take bone with it. Decoronation is the gentler alternative: the crown is removed just below the gumline and the root stays in place, where the body gradually replaces it with bone. This preserves the ridge for a future implant, and one of the interim options above fills the space.

NEXT Dr. Cooke evaluates the site at every visit and coordinates timing with your implant provider.



*Your smile,
crafted with care.*

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