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AGD: FACTSHEET FOR THE PATIENT

Compiled for you by the American Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry

COSMETIC DENTISTRY

What is cosmetic dentistry and how can it improve my smile?

Your dentist can perform a variety of cosmetic procedures to improve your smile—from subtle changes to major repairs. There are many techniques and options to treat teeth that are discolored, chipped, misshapen, or missing. Your dentist can reshape your teeth, close spaces, restore worn teeth, or alter the length of your teeth. Common procedures include teeth whitening, bonding, caps, crowns, veneers, and reshaping and contouring.

What is teeth whitening?

Teeth whitening is a common and popular chemical process used to lighten teeth. Some people get their teeth whitened to make stains disappear, while others just want a brighter smile. Discoloration, which occurs in the enamel, can be caused by medication, coffee, tea, and cigarettes. Discoloration also can be due to your genetic make up or simply from aging. Teeth whitening can be performed by your dentist in the office or, under dental supervision, at home.

What is bonding?

Bonding is the use of tooth-colored material to fill in gaps or change the color of teeth. Bonding lasts several years and often requires only a single office visit. Bonding is more susceptible to staining or chipping than other forms of restoration. When teeth are chipped or slightly decayed, bonded composite resins may be the material of choice. Bonding also is used to fill small cavities, to close spaces between teeth, or to cover the entire outside surface of a tooth.

What are veneers?

Veneers are placed over the front teeth to change the color or shape of your teeth. Veneers are used on teeth with uneven surfaces; on teeth that are chipped, discolored, oddly shaped, unevenly spaced, or crooked; or on teeth that already have large fillings placed. Veneers are thin pieces of porcelain or plastic that are cemented over the front of your teeth. Veneers are used to treat some of the same problems that bonding is used to treat. Veneers also are an alternative to crowns.

What should I look for in a cosmetic dentist?

In order to make sure your dentist is skilled in cosmetic dentistry, the American Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry (AACD) recommends that you ask your dentist for the following items before undergoing treatment:

Before and after photos. These photos will allow you to examine the results of other patients being treated by the dentist to make sure his or her work fits your dental needs.

References. References allow you to get a sense of the quality of care the dentist provides.

Proof of continuing education. Be certain that your dentist has taken continuing education courses to keep him or her up-to-date with the latest techniques in clinical cosmetic dentistry.

Your dentist can answer the questions you have about the techniques used to improve your smile.

The condition of your teeth and your desired result often indicate the best procedure for you.

Do you have questions about dental health?

At the AGD's Web site, you can search more than 300 oral health topics, post a dental question, sign up for e-newletters, find an AGD dentist, and more.

Visit us at *www.agd.org.*

RESOURCES

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At the AGD's Web site, you can search more than 300 oral health topics, post a dental question, sign up for e-newsletters, find an AGD dentist, and more.

1.877.2X.A.YEAR
AGD's toll-free referral number. Call to locate an AGD member dentist in your area.

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