

Brighten Your Smile HOLLYWOOD Style

When people think of cosmetic dentistry, the first thing that typically comes to mind is an expensive Hollywood smile. Although that may have been the case in the 1990s, times have changed. Simple cosmetic dental procedures, once available only at a high-end boutique style dental office, are now becoming more and more mainstream.

Cosmetic bonding, using tooth-colored fillings or bondings is the simplest and most inexpensive way to alter misshapen or chipped teeth, and close small gaps. Bonding is a single visit procedure, covered by most insurance plans, and best of all, it's painless! Cosmetic bonding will look good for a few years, but eventually will need to be replaced as the material ages and stains. This is normal wear and tear.

A longer-term solution to fixing cosmetic issues is the porcelain veneer. Again, a procedure that once was out of reach for most people is now a great alternative to bonding. A thin facing of porcelain is bonded over the existing tooth. This sometimes requires a small amount of tooth structure to be smoothed away, although it can occasionally be done without removing any tooth structure at all. The advantages of porcelain over bonding are many. Porcelain is color stable, it will resist even the most dark staining foods/drinks. You can correct larger gaps and chips, and even correct crooked teeth. The porcelain is very strong, and veneers can last decades without any problems.

One cosmetic solution, often overlooked, is orthodontic alignment of teeth. In the past, the only way to achieve straight teeth was with traditional braces (brackets and wires). There are now a plethora of systems that can correct crooked teeth and spaces without braces.

Popularized by the Invisalign(tm) system, clear aligners are a great alternative to braces. The best part is that these systems are all removable! So if you have a party, or some other social engagement, you can just take them off, and pop them back in when you're done. But keep in mind, while Invisalign(tm) is the most popular system out there, it is not the only system. And the most popular name brand may not be the best for you! Look around ask for alternatives and you just might save some time and money.

Lastly, there is tooth whitening or bleaching. A common misconception about whitening is that it can do permanent damage to your teeth. This is false. Think of your teeth as having pores, like your skin. As a consequence of natural aging and wear and tear, your teeth will stain. When you use a peroxide-based whitening material, the pores in your teeth open up and the peroxide penetrates deep to remove the stain causing debris. During this time, while those pores are open, your teeth will be more sensitive to cold and hot. Don't worry, this is temporary. Once you have completed your whitening treatment, the pores will close again and your sensitivity will be back to normal. Be wary of the cheap one-hour whitening procedures

offered nowadays. These tend to be a good boost before a special occasion like a wedding or graduation, but they do not last. Effective, long-lasting tooth whitening usually requires an at home component coupled with an office component. When done correctly, however, the results really can give you that "wow" factor!

Finding the right dentist for you can be difficult and stressful. So, some things to look for when searching for a good dentist. Remember that there is actually no specialty in the dental field called "Cosmetic Dentistry." Any general dentist can claim to be a cosmetic dentist. And while there are organizations that credential dentists in cosmetics, the largest being the American Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry, the best way to tell if a dentist has the skill and expertise to complete the work you want is to ask your friends. Word of mouth referrals remain the best and most reliable way to be sure you'll be treated well. After you've found a dentist you're comfortable with, talk to them! Don't be afraid to ask questions. If the dentist is not willing to sit down with you during a consultation and discuss your needs and wants, and thoroughly answer your questions, find one who will!

*Saqib H. Mohajir DMD, FADIA
Dr. Mohajir is a member of the American Dental Association, Illinois State Dental Society, Chicago Dental Society and is a Fellow of the American Dental Implant Association. He maintains a private practice in Lemont, Illinois.*



PINEWOOD DENTAL

15884 W. 127TH ST., STE. D | LEMONT, IL | (708) 364-0641