

Ask your dentist about



Improving your Smile

Veneers

Tooth Whitening

Bonding

Enamel Shaping

ADA

A smile can be the most eye-catching feature of a face. With dentistry's many advances, you no longer have to settle for stained, chipped or misshapen teeth. You now have choices that can help you **smile with confidence**. Talk with your dentist about the options for improving your smile.

Veneers

Veneers are thin custom-made shells that are designed to cover the front side of teeth. Made of tooth-colored materials, veneers are used to treat spaces between teeth and teeth that are permanently stained, poorly shaped or slightly crooked. They may also cover teeth that are chipped or worn.



A custom-made solution

Veneers are made from composite resins, acrylic material, or porcelain. Placing veneers is often an irreversible process because a small amount of enamel is usually removed to accommodate the thickness of the shell. Anesthetic may be required depending upon the way the tooth is being prepared. The procedure requires just a few appointments.

Like any restoration, it is possible, over time, for the veneer to come off or for decay to develop. In that case, a new veneer may be required.

Tooth whitening

Tooth whitening — also called bleaching — is a procedure that brightens teeth that are discolored, stained, or have been darkened because of injury. It can be performed on living teeth or teeth that have had root canal treatment.



Two ways to brighten your smile

Bleaching may be done completely in the dental office (known as chairside bleaching) or the dentist may dispense a system for you to use at home (home-use bleaching).

Chairside bleaching takes from 30 minutes to one hour per visit. A chemical solution, the oxidizing agent, is applied to the teeth. A special light may be used at intervals to help activate the bleaching agent. To complete the process, two or more sessions one week apart may be required. It is not uncommon for the teeth to become slightly sensitive following bleaching treatments.

With home-use bleaching, your dentist fabricates a custom-fitted mouthguard that holds a bleaching gel. The mouthguard is worn daily or at night for about two weeks. The amount of time the night-guard is worn and the treatment duration may vary according to your needs and your dentist's recommendations. Although the effects of bleaching may last for several years, teeth can become stained again by beverages and foods such as coffee, tea, and berries. Consequently, periodic touch-up treatments may be needed.

Bonding

Bonding is a cosmetic procedure that can improve the appearance of teeth that are chipped, broken, cracked, stained, or have spaces between them. With bonding, tooth-colored materials are attached, or bonded, to a tooth surface. The process can improve unsightly stains from coffee, tea, tobacco or certain childhood medications; front-tooth spaces; and accident-induced cracks or chips. Bonding is also used to protect exposed tooth roots that result from gum recession and to fill small cavities. Bonding usually lasts from three to five years.



After

A quick and comfortable procedure

The bonding process involves preparing the tooth surface with an etching solution that allows the bonding material (composite resins) to adhere. Composite resins are plastic materials made of glass-like substances and resin. Various color resins are carefully blended to match the existing tooth and look completely natural. The resin is applied, contoured into the proper shape and hardened using a special light or chemical process. It is then smoothed and polished to appear natural. Bonding may not require the use of anesthesia or drilling and can usually be completed in one visit.

Enamel shaping

Enamel shaping is a process of shaping, or contouring natural teeth to improve their overall appearance. When teeth are slightly crowded or uneven, or when eye teeth appear too long, enamel shaping may be used to correct the flaw.



After

Refining your smile

Enamel shaping involves modifying teeth by removing or contouring enamel to create harmony and balance in the mouth. The process, which is often combined with bonding, is usually quick and comfortable. No anesthesia is necessary when shaping the enamel, and the results can be seen immediately. Enamel shaping should be approached with caution, however, because enamel cannot be replaced.

Keep in mind that this more conservative process cannot solve all problems. Crowded teeth may need braces. If so, your dentist may provide treatment or refer you to a specialist in orthodontics.

Even subtle changes in your smile can make a dramatic difference in the way you look and feel about yourself. Discuss with your dentist not only the options most suitable for you, but also what your expectations are and the dental fees involved.

American Dental Association
Division of Communications
211 East Chicago Avenue
Chicago, Illinois 60611-2678

W101

© 2000 American Dental Association
All rights reserved.
To reorder, call 1-800-847-4746.