

# Many options available for smile makeover

By Dr. Rick Borquez

From subtle changes to major repairs, we can perform a variety of procedures to improve the smile. There are many techniques and options to treat teeth that are discolored, chipped, misshapen or missing. We can reshape your teeth, close spaces, restore worn or short teeth or alter the length of your teeth. Common procedures include bleaching, bonding, veneers, crowns, gingival (gum) recontouring, and orthodontics.

## Bleaching

Bleaching is a common and popular chemical process used to whiten teeth. Some people have their teeth bleached to make stains disappear, while others just want a lighter shade. Discoloration occurring in the enamel can be caused by medication, coffee, tea or cigarettes. Discoloration also can be caused by your genetic make-up or simply by getting older.

Bleaching can be performed by your dentist in the office or by the patient at home. Many people prefer bleaching at home because it's more convenient.

Treatment begins when your dentist creates a custom mouthpiece to ensure the correct amount of whitening solution (10 to 20 percent carbamide peroxide) is used and that your teeth are properly exposed. Typically, whitening at home takes two or three weeks, depending on the desired shade you wish to achieve. If I use office bleaching for my patients, I will also have them use a home bleaching kit.

## Contouring and reshaping

Tooth reshaping and contouring is a procedure to correct crooked teeth, chipped teeth, cracked teeth or even overlapping teeth in a single session. Tooth reshaping and dental contouring are commonly used to alter the length, shape or position of your teeth. Contouring teeth may also help correct small problems with bite. It is common for bonding to be combined with tooth reshaping. This procedure is ideal for candidates with normal healthy teeth who want subtle changes to their smile.

## Bonding

Bonding is tooth-colored material used to fill in gaps or change the color of teeth, requiring a single office visit. Bonding lasts three to seven years and is more susceptible to staining or chipping than other types of restoration.

When teeth are chipped or slightly decayed, bonded composite resins may be the material of choice. Bonding is also used as a tooth-colored filling of small cavities and broken or chipped surfaces. Additionally, it can be used to close spaces between teeth or cover the entire outside surface of a tooth to change its color and shape.

## Veneers

Veneers are placed over the front teeth to change the color or the shape of your teeth. Veneers are used on teeth with uneven surfaces or teeth that are chipped, discolored, oddly shaped, unevenly spaced or crooked. Veneers are thin pieces of porcelain or plastic cemented over the top of your teeth. Veneers are used to treat some of the same problems as bonding.

## A bonding enhancement



Before



After

They also have a longer life expectancy and color stability than bonding. This treatment is an alternative to crowns, when applicable, and requires only conservative tooth preparation. The treatment takes two appointments. At the first appointment, molds (impressions) are taken of the altered teeth. They are sent to a lab, where the veneers are fabricated. Temporary veneers are worn during the interim. At the second appointment

the temporary veneers are removed and the permanent veneers are cemented (bonded) with a light beam.

## Crowns

Crowns, also known as caps, are used in areas where other procedures will not be efficient. If a crown is necessary in the front of the mouth, I will use the type without metal. It will not create that dark line that is commonly seen. Crowns remove more tooth structure than any other restoration but have the longest life expectancy.

## Gingival (gum) recontouring

Gingival contouring is altering the position of your gumline to improve your smile. The gingival (gum) procedure can make a short tooth look long by tissue removal. This can also make a long tooth look shorter by grafting (adding gum tissue) to the area. The treatment can be done by traditional

methods or by laser.

## Orthodontics

Many times I will refer my adult patients who have crooked teeth to a cosmetic orthodontist prior to the cosmetic restorations. The specialist will properly align the teeth. This will give the patient the best cosmetic result and can minimize the need for cosmetic restoration.

## Which procedure is right for me?

Each procedure can give some results. The condition of the teeth and the desired level of results often dictate the best procedure. If you are considering a smile makeover, contact my office and my staff will guide you through the process.

Some of the most common questions asked are:

- What will the changes look like?
- What should I expect through the course of treatment?
- What will be the cost of treatment?
- What type of maintenance will be required?

Good luck in your journey for that smile you've always wanted. Remember, creating smiles is an art.

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