

A Smile Makeover...

The popularity of the television show, *Extreme Makeover*, seems to have come and gone, but the allure of a beautiful smile remains the same. One of the most common requests we get from patients, young and old, is to have their smile made over. As with most things in life, the perfect smile tends to be in the eye of the beholder. Most of us recognize a pretty smile when we see it, but few (besides those of us that stare at teeth every day) could accurately provide a technical description of what that beautiful smile entails. If you want to be proud of those pearly whites, here are a few options to start with.

A Good Tooth Cleaning – The first step to getting that perfect look is to remove the extrinsic stains from your teeth. Sometimes, this can be as simple as a routine dental cleaning accompanied by an exam and x-rays to check for other problems. Many of the stains our teeth pick up can be polished out by a dental hygienist. If that doesn't pretty them up enough, read on.

Whitening – Tooth bleaching is the next step to a whiter, brighter smile. Bleaching can be accomplished in a single office visit (in-office whitening) or trays can be made (take home whitening) to allow you to whiten your teeth at your leisure. Both systems work well; they just depend on your personality. If you are a person who wants instant results and you know you won't wear trays filled with bleaching gel every night for two weeks, then get the in-office treatment. If you are a person blessed with patience and consistency, save some money and bleach your teeth at home for a few weeks. Either way, you can get your teeth as white as you want them.

Orthodontics (Braces) – Few people consider braces part of a smile makeover but they surely are. We often see people who have beautifully shaped, well proportioned teeth that are out of alignment. In these cases, orthodontics can line up the teeth and whitening can finish the job to create that perfect smile.

Replace Old Restorations – Dental restorations (tooth colored fillings, front crowns, etc.) tend to lose their luster through the years. They fight the battle with Father Time along with the rest of our bodies. Often, we can bleach the un-restored teeth first, then replace a few of those old, worn out restorations to get your smile to look the way you want it.

Gingival Plastic Surgery – Some people have beautiful teeth, but the frame around their teeth (the gum tissue) is not proportioned correctly. This can make the teeth look out of alignment. Gum recontouring can often fix the problem of short teeth or a "gummy" smile.

New Dentures – Recent research has suggested that complete dentures be replaced as often as every five years because they can harbor harmful bacteria. Esthetically, most dentures lose their luster somewhere along that same time frame. Denture teeth and base materials seem to get more esthetic each and every year. As an added bonus, you get to pick out your own teeth as far as their size, shape, color, and arrangement.

Full Mouth Rehabilitation – This is truly an extreme dental makeover. We can use a combination of tooth colored crowns, porcelain veneers, bridges, and dental implants to restore the youth and vigor to your face and smile by putting your bite, jaw joint, and your teeth into a healthy, physiologic position. You truly get your healthy teeth and smile back.

The possibilities are endless. When dentistry fits into your life, give it a try. Until next week, keep smiling.

-Questions or comments can be sent to Drs. Parrish at ParrishDental@aol.com.