

Smile enhancement using dental veneers

By Dr Elvin Leong

Improve your smile

Smile makeovers can be achieved through the use of veneers – thin, custom-made high strength porcelain or composite resin shells designed to fit discreetly over the teeth.

Veneers as a smile solution

Dentists have a large array of treatment methods in their arsenal to help patients regain their sparkling smiles, including teeth whitening, braces, implants and veneers.

Those with the following dental problems may benefit from having veneers:

- Discoloured teeth due to root canal treatment, stains from medication, excessive fluoride or other causes, or large resin fillings that have resulted in the tooth being discoloured
- Worn down teeth
- Broken or chipped teeth
- Uneven, misaligned or irregularly shaped teeth
- Gaps between teeth

In addition to aesthetic benefits, veneers also have a functional purpose as they protect the surface of a damaged tooth. They may even replace the need for a crown in

certain situations, eliminating the need for more invasive tooth preparation.

While teeth whitening can help brighten the smiles of those who have stained teeth due to external causes (e.g. food, coffee or smoking), teeth whitening are of limited effect when it comes to intrinsic staining of the teeth (e.g. medication or excessive fluoride). This is where veneers can help.

Braces are an effective method to straighten teeth. However, treatment is generally completed over a period of 18 months to two years. When the mis-alignment of teeth is moderate and fulfills certain clinical requirements, veneers can accomplish this in as little as two visits to the dentist.

What is involved in veneers?

There are three main stages:

- A consultation with a dentist and an assessment of whether veneers are the appropriate solution for a patient's dental condition.
- The teeth to be treated with veneers are shaped in order

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to accommodate the custom-made shells. Some enamel may need to be removed from the front of the tooth surface. Patients are given temporary veneers while the final veneers are fabricated in the dental laboratory.

- A few days later, the veneers will be ready for bonding (cementing) to the tooth. The dentist will check again to see if the color and fit are suitable before cementing the veneers. Patients can generally resume normal activities on the same day and there is minimal downtime.

Porcelain veneers offer a stronger and more durable choice over composite resin veneers. Composite resin

veneers are more prone to staining and may require more maintenance compared with porcelain veneers. This could mean that composite veneers may end up costing more in the long run, despite their lower initial cost, as compared with porcelain veneers.

Maintenance of veneers

Veneers generally last for 10 to 15 years and regular visits to the dentist are important to ensure that your teeth and the veneers are in good condition.

The key to successful veneers treatment is built on the foundation of accurate clinical examination and diagnosis. An attractive and lasting smile is achievable and predictable with veneers. ♥

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