

Cosmetic Dentistry: Because No Smile Is Perfect

It was an icy Saturday afternoon. I was 14 years old. My neighbor and I had the brilliant idea of taking turns lying in a huge, steel industrial tube and pushing each other down a small hillside for entertainment. He crawled inside and I was the first to push. Unfortunately, the tube probably weighed a ton and the ground was a sheet of ice. The force of pushing forward sent both my legs out from under me at the same time. As I fell face-first into the metal tube, I heard a snapping noise in my head. There was no pain because it was a bitter day, but I knew that the noise I heard was the corner of my right-front tooth breaking. I was scared and upset because I was always told I had a nice smile and now it was ruined. Fortunately, my family dentist was able to repair and save my tooth with minimal intrusion. He bonded a white composite to the broken tooth and then sanded and smoothed it

out. To this day, that bond has held and it is almost imperceptible.

Cosmetic dentistry is a growing trend among adults. People want to look good. Call it vanity or call it narcissism, the fact is that today's society wants and almost expects attractiveness. Experts will tell you that image and mental health are related. People have more confidence and have a higher self-esteem when they look good. You know how you feel after a good haircut or the first day you wear a new suit or dress? It is the same with your teeth, maybe it is even more important because they are a permanent part of you. A smile is the first thing that people notice. It is a symbol of friendliness and happiness, so of course you want it to look as good as possible. Cosmetic dentistry gives adults options about their teeth that they may not have had when they were younger, because the techniques did not exist then or they

could not afford them at the time.

Robert Piposar, D.M.D., of North Hills, is a cosmetic dentist who specializes in dental implants. For years, he has been utilizing porcelain veneers, which are "a thin layer of glass that can change the color and shape of teeth." He continues, "The porcelain veneers are matched to the patient's teeth color and desired shape and the material is



bonded

to the

damaged tooth." This procedure is much less intrusive than regular capping and it can be used for genetic abnormalities as well as accidental damage. According to Dr. Piposar, insurance coverage of cosmetic dentistry varies. You should check with you, insurer for details.

Cosmetic appearances even affect choices for cavity fillings. Piposar's associate, Jonathan Kohler, D.D.S., says, "People are getting away from silver fillings and now prefer white, composite-resin fillings." He claims that patients prefer white fillings in their back teeth, even though they are much less visible. "Most, if given the option, would rather not see any fillings at all," Kohler states. As far as dental-health factors, Kohler says that there is not really a difference between silver, metal and white, resin fillings. "Larger fillings should be silver, but today, they both have about the same durability."

Orthodontists specialize in braces and teeth straightening. But this is not just for kids anymore. John Grady, D.M.D., an orthodontist who practices in Wexford, says that 15 percent of his patients are adults (over 21). "We have people from ages 30 to 60: every decade is represented," he states. Adults seem to

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prefer clear braces because they are much less noticeable. Currently, clear braces are high quality and are just as good as the old, standard, stainless steel braces.

There is also a new straightening system available called Invisalign. Dr. Grady says, "The company takes models of a person's teeth and a computer makes clear, aligning retainers from the model." The patient then wears a sequence of these retainers, which gradually straightens the teeth. Since the Invisalign is custom-made, it fits the patient perfectly. "In addition," says Grady, "the clear, slip-on plastic covers are almost completely unnoticeable; they just make the teeth a little shiny." The use of Invisalign is growing and Dr. Grady's patients like it very much. "The only downsides," he adds, "are that they are only good for adults with milder cases and they are about 50 percent more expensive than regular braces." When asked why adults come back to straighten their teeth after so many years, Dr. Grady replies, "People come in because their teeth become more crooked as they age and some of their parents could not afford braces when they were children." He concludes, "It is definitely a self-esteem boost; people smile more and feel better about their physical appearance and themselves."

Anna Marie Priore, of Ross Township, will be turning 64 years old. But before her birthday, she will finally have her braces removed after two years. Anna needed two dental implants to correct her bite, and as a result, she needed braces to straighten her teeth. She explains, "I got clear braces for the top row and metal braces for the bottom row, because you can't see my bottom teeth when I smile. There is definitely a big difference" Anna continues, "I had beautiful teeth when I was younger and now I have them again. I feel like I am 16!" she says with a smile.

For more information about cosmetic dentistry and porcelain veneers, contact the dental office of Robert Puposar, D.M.D. at 412-847-1420. For more information on clear braces and Invisalign, call John Grady, D.M.D. at 724-935-9222, or consult with your family dentist. ♦

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