

Get a red carpet smile!

A wide, confident smile can melt away the years, so it's no wonder cosmetic dentistry is becoming so popular. If you'd love to have whiter, straighter teeth, we tell you everything you need to know. By Antonia Kanazula

Q Will cosmetic dentistry make me look younger?

Definitely. Think of it as the dental equivalent of a face-lift! As you get older, teeth become stained, wear down and even fall out. As a result, the area of the face between your nose and chin gets smaller and cheeks can become sunken. A cosmetic dentist can whiten teeth and replace any old or missing ones, thus plumping out your face and 'lifting it' so you look younger.

Q What procedures are available?

There are many treatments available to suit different cosmetic needs as well as budgets. These vary from whitening procedures, which start at around £150, to £6,000 plus for a dental face-lift, where each tooth is replaced individually. But getting treatment on the NHS is very difficult. Dr Nigel Carter, chief executive of the British Dental Health Foundation says, 'Most cosmetic surgery is only available through private practices - some procedures, such as >



Kristin Scott Thomas knows she can dazzle the paparazzi with her winning smile

SAY CHEESE

Sue Kay, 50, from Chorleywood, Hertfordshire, had veneers and crowns fitted on 24 of her teeth at the Bloomsbury Dental Group (call 0870 112 3602 or visit www.bloomsburydental.com). 'Not only do I look better, but I can eat and drink what I like without suffering the sensitivity that I used to,' says Sue. 'I'm able to chew properly now too, without biting chunks out of my cheeks and tongue!'



Sue had veneers and crowns fitted to her teeth and loves the results

crowns, are sometimes obtained on the NHS if there's a clinical necessity, but it's very restricted.'

Q What about white fillings?

White fillings cost from £40 each. They're popular mainly for cosmetic purposes, but can also be used if someone is allergic to amalgam fillings. It's the same as having silver ones fitted, but they don't last as long. However, drilling out old fillings to replace them with white ones can be a lengthy, painful process.

Q Is it too late to straighten my teeth? I'm in my 40s...

'Absolutely not,' says Dr Rahul Doshi, cosmetic dentist at The Perfect Smile Studios in Hertford. 'You can transform crooked teeth with porcelain veneer techniques, where thin pieces of porcelain are glued over the front of the teeth. They cost from £150 per tooth and will straighten your smile within just two visits over a fortnight.' Another option is orthodontic treatment, but this can take up to two years for results. 'Check if your dentist has experience of adult orthodontistry as the field is more specialised,' warns Dr Oliver Harman from London-based practice, Dentic's.

Q What about tooth whitening?

There are two main whitening techniques: bleaching and laser whitening. Bleaching is the most common procedure, in which a mouth tray containing hydrogen peroxide solution is worn over the teeth for periods at a time. With laser whitening, a bleaching gel is put on the teeth, then activated by a laser and the whole process is done in one go. Bleaching costs from £150 per session and laser

whitening from about £500. Dr Doshi says whitening is suitable for most people, but warns, 'It's important to have healthy teeth and gums, so visit a hygienist first.' Also, if you're pregnant or have just given birth, it might not be for you.

Q What if my teeth look too bright?

How white your teeth become depends on their condition and the procedure used. Some procedures claim to whiten teeth by up to nine shades, but more realistically they will lighten them by two or three shades. It's not permanent either – with results lasting between one to two years. As for veneers, you can specifically select a natural-looking shade that won't 'blind' you.

Q Are whitening kits effective?

They can be if used correctly, and they're a cheaper option too, costing as little as £15. The principle is the same as for trays used by dentists, but current legislation means that they can only contain low levels of peroxide, so don't expect dramatic results. There are lots of whitening toothpastes and stain removers on the market too – they won't lighten your teeth, but they'll help restore their natural colour. Try Back2White stain remover, £12.95 (call 0800 013 2333 for stockists).

Q When should I consider crowns?

Crowns 'cap' and strengthen weakened teeth and improve their appearance. There are various types available, including metal, porcelain or a combination of the two. They cost from around £250 per tooth and should last you for

years. It's usually straightforward to replace metal crowns with the latest all-porcelain ones.

Q What else is new in dentistry?

Dental implants are when a new tooth is literally grown to replace one that's missing. Costing up to £1000 per tooth, it's a very expensive procedure but the new teeth can last a lifetime. Another new technique is the Dentafacelift pioneered by Dr Nick Mohindra. It works by rebuilding and replacing missing and worn teeth, which helps to build up facial muscles and tighten the skin. For details, call Added Dimension Dentistry in London on 020 7636 9978 or visit www.dentafacelift.com.

Q How long do cosmetic treatments last?

Whitening fades on average by 25% in the first 18 months, dropping off to around 37% over three years. However, your teeth will still be whiter than they were pre-treatment and you can use home bleaching mouth trays to maintain the colour. 'Veneers should last from 10-15 years, but have regular checks for wear and tear,' advises Dr Harman.

Q How can I find a qualified cosmetic dentist?

The best way to find a dentist is by recommendation. 'Don't shop around for bargains – you may end up spending twice as much to correct the treatment later,' says Dr Harman. 'Take along a close-up photo which shows the smile you want and be very clear about what you can afford. Always ask your dentist for a written treatment plan with an estimate of charges.' **HP**

HealthPlus Recommends

✳ **Contact** the *British Dental Health Foundation* on 0870 333 1188 or visit www.dentalhealth.org.uk for information and advice; *Dentic's* call 07000 336842 or visit www.dentic's.co.uk for branches in your area; *The Perfect Smile Studios* call 0845 600 8200 or visit www.theperfectsmile.co.uk for information on their services; for qualified dentists in your area call *The British Academy of Cosmetic Dentists* on 020 7612 4166 or visit www.bacd.com.