

# Banishing Discolored Teeth



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The color of our teeth is a combination of our genetics, our diet, our environment, our age, and our maintenance. Today's dentists can safely cleanse, hide or brighten the look of teeth, replacing the displeasing or damaged color. The techniques used by dentists can dramatically change someone's dark and dull smile to a much more noticeable brightness, more alluring and youthful in appearance. In fact, this dramatic change has also been shown to have increased the level of confidence in some patients which have had these enhancing procedures done.

Patients must first have a thorough history and a complete examination done to enable the dentist to determine the benefits of these procedures as well as to screen for any pathology detrimental to the patient's health. A consultation with the patient describing selected procedures is given by the dentist to address the discoloration and any other treatment which may need to be resolved prior to the procedure. The patient will also be scheduled with a hygienist to create a healthy gum tissue environment before any elective treatment is begun.

There are three procedures used today to change the color of teeth using minimal if any, tooth reduction. First, teeth can be whitened with a carbamide peroxide solution which is placed in a tray and worn overnight for several days. A hydrogen peroxide solution can also be placed in a tray and worn for only a couple of hours at a time. An in office whitening procedure can also be chosen which is much more rapid and requires more chair time. A second procedure, known as bonding, can also be done when whitening by peroxide alone is not sufficient or when only a small number of teeth are involved. Bonding is a direct to tooth procedure requiring one visit and uses the latest techniques in shading, highlighting and polishing of "white-colored" tooth filling material to create the desired effect. And thirdly, thin shells of porcelain known as veneers can be designed to create a more dramatic change and are permanently bonded onto the teeth. This procedure will require more than one visit and is usually done on multiple teeth.

Simply doing crowns to cover darkened or yellow teeth is no longer the only alternative. In fact, in most cases crowns may not be necessary, nor is it necessary simply to do nothing about discolored teeth. This wave of new cosmetic dentistry can complement a person's attitude, confidence and personal hygiene. It's now part of our lifestyle.