

THE ULTIMATE COSMETIC ENHANCEMENT GUIDE

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SPECIAL EDITION



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smile

WRITTEN BY MICHELE BENDER

SATISFACTION

WHO KNEW THAT YOUR SMILE COULD MAKE YOU LOOK FAT? OR THIN? OR YOUNGER? OR OLDER? YOUR SMILE PLAYS A MAJOR ROLE IN YOUR APPEARANCE. That's because your teeth create an illusion, which can make you look better or worse. For example, if you have a long or oval face, long teeth will make it appear elongated and more drawn, while a round face with long teeth would appear slimmer. On the contrary, front teeth that are too wide or too straight across can make that round face appear fatter. Teeth that are off-center, have gaps or are fang-shaped can be distracting, causing people to look away from your eyes and focus much more on your mouth. The bottom line? Don't forget your smile when you're considering cosmetic changes. It can make other procedures you're having look better and might even make them unnecessary. If Mother Nature didn't give you a smile that complements your face, getting one is possible, thanks to cutting-edge technology, state-of-the-art materials and advanced techniques. Today, it's easy to get a grin that looks as natural if you were born with it—even if you bought it.

# analyze YOUR SMILE

**>** YOU MAY KNOW THAT YOU DON'T LIKE YOUR SMILE. What you may not realize is why and what you're looking for in a new and improved one. However, attaining this information is key to getting pearly whites that you love. "The biggest reason people are unhappy with their cosmetic dental treatment is that they didn't know what they wanted before they went into it," says Atlanta cosmetic dentist Ronald Goldstein, DDS. "When a patient comes in with a sense of what they like and dislike about their smile, it's much easier to give them a final result they love," adds Daniel Deutsch, DDS, co-director of the Washington D.C. Center for Dentistry. "If patients just say 'I don't like my smile,' it's hard to know what that means."

Of course it's not necessary to fix every aesthetic problem, and you probably won't want to, but knowing the components of a beautiful smile can help you figure out what you might not like about your own and which areas you want to enhance. An ideal smile has front teeth that are a bit longer than those next to them and can be seen slightly when lips are parted or when you speak. The biting edges of your upper teeth should follow the curve of your lower lip and almost all of your upper teeth should show when you smile. Beautiful pearly whites should be—well—white, have rounded or pointy edges, and reflect and refract light. "Any dental restorations should look natural, and gums should be a healthy pink and form half-moons above each tooth," says Fort Lauderdale, Florida, dentist Allan D. Gross, DDS. In the end, your dentist will help to determine which cosmetic changes are realistic for you, but being armed with information before you go is priceless.

## Test time

The following exercises can help identify any smile problems and firm up your ultimate smile makeover goals. Set aside time when you're not stressed or rushed and give your grin a good once-over. Here's how.

### EXERCISE 1

#### Determine your facial shape

Pull your hair back into a ponytail or off your face. Have a photo taken of yourself from straight on (You can tell it's straight if your ears both appear the same size in the photo); black and white is best, but color will do, and make the photo at least 5"x7" in size. Look at the outline of your face in the photo. Try to figure out if it's square, round, long or heart-shaped—or which one it's closest to. The best-looking smiles are compatible with facial shape.

### EXERCISE 2

#### View your smile in proper perspective

Set up a mirror by a window. Natural light helps you see your teeth's true color better than bathroom light. Stand at an arm's length away from the mirror. Make sure you're looking at your smile straight-away with eyes parallel to the floor, not with your head cocked to one side.

## EXERCISE 3

Questions to ask yourself...

**LINING UP**

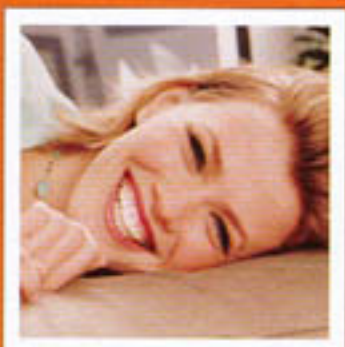
Are your lower six front teeth straight and even in appearance and length?

**UNIFORM COLOR**

When you smile, are all your teeth the same color? Look at them from both the front and side—a small hand mirror can help.

**GUM RECESSON**

Does your gum tissue create a half-moon shape around each tooth or has it receded so that gums appear flat? Does it look like you have black triangles between teeth?



ASK YOURSELF THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS, TAKEN FROM DR. GOLDSTEIN'S CONSUMER GUIDEBOOK, *CHANGE YOUR SMILE*.

**GUMMY SMILE**

When you smile, do your gums show too much or too little?

**FILL THE GAP**

Do you have spaces between your teeth?

> JOT DOWN THE ANSWERS AND SHARE THEM WITH YOUR COSMETIC DENTIST AT YOUR CONSULTATION.

## HOW TO GET A GREAT grin

### > Dental talk

What should you talk about with your cosmetic dentist at the first appointment? Based on the smile analysis you've done, you'll know the issues you have with your teeth and have a "wish list" of what you want to achieve. Bring these notes with you, along with any X-rays or models you've had made. "If you want your smile restored to a previous condition—like when you were younger—bring photos to show the dentist," suggests Dr. Deutsch. Or bring photos of other smiles you like. While you may not have a face like Cindy Crawford's, her smile gives the dentist a sense of what you find aesthetically pleasing. Ask to see before-and-after photos of patients he or she has treated for similar problems. Ask for patient referrals. Feel free to get a second opinion and don't bargain-hunt. "This isn't the place to pinch pennies," says Dr. Goldstein. "You want quality results—otherwise, you may end up spending twice the money and time on additional makeover treatments." Most of all, make sure you feel comfortable and confident with the dentist. "This is critical, because he or she will be in charge of your new smile, and most dental work is irreversible," says Laurence Rifkin, DDS, Beverly Hills aesthetic and restorative dentist.

### Space savers

Lauren Hutton's gap-toothed smile is her trademark, but if you don't like yours, it's easier than ever to change. First, your dentist needs to check why the space is there—especially if it's relatively new. It may be caused by gum disease or a habit of sticking your tongue in the space. If it's just an aesthetic problem, you can close the gap with fixed or removable braces, bonding or veneers. Fixed or removable braces (\$3,000–\$8,000) are placed by an orthodontist who maps out the incremental movements needed to rearrange teeth. They can even be almost invisible, such as Invisalign. Another option is bonding (\$300–\$1,500 *per tooth*), a one-appointment procedure that instantly closes gaps. The dentist applies an enamel-like, tooth-colored material to teeth, shapes it, hardens it with a special light and polishes it. Veneers (\$1,200–\$3,500 *each*) are fingernail-thin porcelain shells that are attached to the fronts of teeth after about 1/2 millimeter of enamel is removed from them. You wear temps for a few weeks while your veneers are being made, and once they're ready, they're bonded to your teeth and should last about 10 to 15 years. "Both bonding and veneers can help close spaces by creating the illusion that your teeth are proportionately wider," says Atlanta cosmetic dentist Hugh Flax, DDS. "They are also great solutions for chipped or worn teeth." Unlike older veneers and bonding materials, which looked flat and chalk white (aka "Chiclet teeth"), modern-day materials mimic the appearance of natural enamel. Your choice of procedure depends on the size and location of your gaps, or in the case of chipped or worn teeth, the severity of the damage. Another factor is how quickly you want the space closed. Braces can take 12 to 24 months but preserve your natural teeth; bonding is done in one appointment; veneers take just a few appointments but require removal of some enamel.

### DENTAL IMPLANTS

If a tooth is missing or broken to a point that the root is damaged, a titanium artificial root can be implanted in place of the natural root. Within three to six months, the implant bonds with your bone, at which point, a crown can be placed over the implant. Since the implant becomes part of the jaw, it looks and feels so natural that you just may forget it's an implant at all!

But why opt for a dental implant over a bridge? Atlanta dentist Edward Mills, DDS, says dental implants have one primary advantage: "When an implant is placed, the bone is stimulated, thus preserved. With a bridge, most patients experience bone atrophy." Dr. Mills also says that implants have enhanced longevity and he finds them more aesthetically pleasing than a crown or bridge.



{ 74% }

of American adults feel an  
unattractive smile can hurt their  
chances for career success.  
—American Academy of Cosmetic  
Dentistry consumer study

## STRAIGHTEN UP DISCREETLY

You can straighten your teeth without anyone calling you metal mouth. "Though crooked teeth can also be fixed with veneers, orthodontics are even better because they help preserve your natural tooth structure," says New York City cosmetic dentist Lana Rozenberg, DDS. One option is Invisalign, clear plastic removable appliances which look somewhat like retainers or bleaching trays. Molds of your teeth are taken to create—along with your orthodontist's or dentist's treatment plan—a series of 18 to 30 aligners that incrementally moves your teeth into the desired position are created. You wear each set all the time—except for eating and brushing teeth—for about two weeks, then move on to the next set over the course of six to 18 months. After that, you wear retainers. Though they cost as much (\$3,000–\$8,000) and take as long to work as traditional metal braces, they're so discreet most people won't know you have them on. "We have found that our patients love to wear Invisalign," says New York City orthodontist Jennifer Salzer, DDS. "They get the benefit of beautiful, straight teeth without having to wear old-fashioned braces." These aligners don't fix all types of crooked teeth, so you may need traditional braces, but even they are more technologically advanced today. Many come in clear or tooth-colored materials and some can be placed behind teeth.

One option called SureSmile is tooth-colored wire that is programmed to make the tiny movements necessary to straighten out your smile. Again, this can take up to two years and cost as much as traditional braces. If you also want to change other things about your teeth, say their color, size or length, veneers may be used after teeth are straightened. "If you opt for braces, find an orthodontist who specializes in adults," says New York City dentist Jonathan Levine, DMD. "Moving teeth in adults can often cause periodontal problems, and these specialists are well-trained in dealing with this."

## Stain removal

Surface stains are typically dark brown and caused by coffee, tea, cigarettes, dark berries and poor dental hygiene. Minor discoloration can be remedied with a good professional cleaning, scaling and/or polishing (an excellent reason to keep those regular appointments), while more severe stains require power bleaching, the use of a strong peroxide solution or high-intensity light in a one-hour session at your dentist's office (about \$500–\$1,200). Bleaching can make teeth up to eight shades brighter, but it can take several appointments and won't change the color of crowns, veneers or bonding material. "Maintenance is vital after bleaching," says New York City cosmetic dentist Irwin Smigel, DDS. "If you brush properly and care for your teeth, you'll be able to maintain the results of bleaching for a longer time." Another option for one or two stained teeth is bonding (\$300–\$1,500).

White calcification spots are usually caused by imperfect enamel formation during childhood, too much fluoride or improper care while wearing braces. Bleaching usually doesn't help, but very superficial spots can be removed with cosmetic contouring, where a dentist uses a drill to gently shave off some enamel, or microabrasion (\$200–\$500), where a dentist uses pumice and a slow-speed hand piece with a rubber tip to polish the spot away. If necessary, bonding or veneers can be used to cover spots. They are usually the best solution for bands of brown and gray or blue-gray discolorations that are caused by hereditary conditions or childhood antibiotic use.



Eight veneers placed on the upper teeth.

88%

of American adults believe an unattractive smile makes a person less appealing to the opposite sex.  
—AACD consumer study

## A gummy smile

Your gum tissue frames the top of your tooth, giving it its shape. However, when you have excess gum tissue, teeth may appear shorter, resulting in the notorious "gummy smile." In a procedure called a gum lift, or gingivectomy (\$1,200–\$3,600), your dentist can trim excess or uneven gum tissue to make teeth look more proportioned using laser or traditional surgery. However, which technique is used depends on your particular problem and the dentist you see. Lasers are relatively new, so laser experts aren't always easy to find. Because more of the tooth's root surface may be exposed after a gum lift, veneers or bonding materials can be applied. The result is teeth that appear longer and gums that don't steal the show.



