

Give yourself a reason to SMILE (part 2)



By **Karen Gardner**
Clinica Dental La Plaza.

DENTIST KAREN Gardner explains how to make the best use of advances in cosmetic dentistry.

LIGHTEN UP

Teeth whitening has been given a bad name by inexperienced dentists, or even beauty salons that illegally try their hand with inferior products. But it is possible to whiten teeth effectively and safely.

Discolouration can be caused by a number of factors: smoking, red wine, common antibiotics taken in childhood which can cause grey tinge; a dead tooth, which may look darker than the rest; or enamel hypoplasia brown marks where enamel has not formed properly. So the solution may vary according to the problem.

Research seems to indicate that low

concentrations of bleaching agent applied over time is better than quick fix laser whitening, which is more likely to make teeth sensitive. The best solution is putting a little bleach on custom moulded trays (like gumshields), which are worn every night for two to six weeks. This slow and sustained release gives more predictable and long lasting results – teeth stay white for up to ten years, and even then, won't return to the original shade.

Celebrities 'fridge-white' smiles are often a sign of veneers, not bleach-whitened teeth. No matter how much bleaching agent you apply, all teeth have a maximum level beyond which they will not whiten – the most natural effect is when teeth match the whites of your eyes.

Discolouration can be lifted easily, but the greyness caused by antibiotics takes longer, and enamel hypoplasia may need treating before bleaching. The colour of crowns or white fillings cannot be improved by bleaching, but a dead tooth can now be lightened by putting bleach inside the pulp chamber which is the innermost part of the tooth.

IMPLANTS NOT BRIDGES

If you split or fracture your tooth, an implant may be a superior alternative to a bridge. A titanium screw is put into the bone and a crown is fixed on top. The traditional method of filling a gap is to shave down the teeth on either side so a bridge can be bonded to them and

A beautiful smile



the gap filled, but this damages two potentially healthy teeth. An implant, however, causes no damage, and while it may seem expensive, it is permanent. Be warned that an implant may be a complex process if you've lived with a gap for a long time, as bone is resorbed with time.

MORE NATURAL-LOOKING CROWNS

The look of a crown is often spoiled by its metal content, appearing as a thin black line at the gum margin. Metal under a crown also makes the tooth appear more opaque. When your needs replacing, ask for the new porcelain-only crowns called empress, procer, lava, inceram zirconia or alumina, which are equally strong with no black rim. They are far superior and more biocompatible with the gum.

Another way to avoid discolouration

is use of glass fibre posts instead of metal posts, where necessary.

INVISIBLE BRACES

No longer just for teenagers, braces are increasingly common amongst 40 something's.

New technology has developed some more rapid treatments for adults who want to straighten crooked teeth without causing too much damage.

Advances in technology mean you don't have to have metal braces. Ask about 'lingual' appliances, which sit invisibly on the tongue-side of your teeth or 'clear aligners' which look like plastic gumshields and can be taken out for special occasions.

It may seem a long haul, and it's not an instant solution like veneers, but the result is completely natural and your new smile will be permanent.



Nice teeth make you want to smile

Article supplied by Dr Karen Gardner, of Clinica Dental La Plaza, Edificio La Plaza, next to Club de Tennis - Javea. Tel 966 461 120 for a free consultation, check-up and advice.

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