

DENTAL MAKEOVERS

Lately, many magazines, newspapers, and TV shows have been following a “Makeover trend”, some going from head to toe involving serious surgery. It seems some people are unhappy with their natural appearance and want to do something about it.

One area can be simple to improve and provide dramatic results; the smile. The smile is something most people notice immediately and can have a major impact on a first and lasting impression. A generally clean, well-groomed appearance is important and expected, but a nice smile can instantly create a positive image.

Have you ever noticed that professional models rarely smile and can still look great? In fact, many style photographers *frown* upon smiling. In modeling, *sultry* is “in”. Eyes and puffy lips become the key focus, and good facial symmetry seems to help. Perhaps these models are genetically lucky, or is it the make-up artistry? It is amazing what a little makeover “make-up” magic can do, as can be noticed when actors and models are caught off camera by the tabloid paparazzi.

Imagine looking at an average person you don’t know that is not smiling, perhaps being preoccupied. With the muscles relaxed one may have natural frown lines, a down-turned mouth, droopy eyes, all of which can be associated with age, grumpiness, tiredness, or being unhappy. You may not be impressed.

Now imagine that same person sees you and begins a smile with their mouth closed. Frown lines disappear, eyes turn up a little, and friendliness can be interpreted. Now the lips slowly part, the smile enlarges, eyes turn-up more, and happiness or warmth become apparent. It makes you smile, also. The smile and teeth are very important to how we are perceived.

But, what if teeth are missing, are dark, discolored from decay or old fillings, or are very crooked or spaced? The admirer’s eyes may immediately look away and a previously positive impression can turn negative. Forget the benefits of today’s beauty trends of the cute little nose, full lips, high cheekbones, and the “*Botox*” wrinkle-free face. If the teeth are in poor shape you have to stick to the sultry, non-smiling look.

The art of cosmetic dentistry can range from simple and inexpensive to complex and expensive. It can be as simple as cleaning, and bleaching with over-the-counter products, or as involved as jaw surgery and implants depending on your actual needs and desires. Bleaching, bonding, orthodontics, crowns, veneers, implants can all be done to enhance your smile.

The transformation process begins with a “Smile Design” appointment with your dentist, and taking responsibility to improve and maintain good oral health. No matter what the dentist does it can be reversed by lack of proper care. Healthy gums and clean teeth will help make your smile look great. Daily flossing and brushing, and seeing your dentist regularly, are all extremely important to help maintain your new appearance and investment.

Teeth can often be replaced with a permanent bridge, a removable partial denture, or implants. Implants can be used to replace one tooth, several teeth, support bridges, and support removable dentures. Dental implants have been used successfully for many years and have about a 95% success rate. Similar to natural teeth they are secured to the jawbone and support the top, visible “crown” of your tooth. A specially trained and experienced dentist painlessly places the screw-like implant into the jawbone. A special attachment is connected to the implant, then a crown is placed on it to look and function like a real tooth. All of this can be done in two to four visits, typically with very little discomfort.

If there are spaces between teeth, crooked, worn, or discolored teeth, veneers can often correct the problems simply and quickly. With porcelain veneers, bonding, or crowns, short teeth can be made to look longer, narrow teeth wider and crooked teeth straighter in most cases. A porcelain veneer is like a “mask” that conceals the defects and irregularities of teeth. Very little tooth structure is removed on the front surface of the teeth and the thin porcelain veneers are glued on to create an attractive new appearance. This makeover can usually be completed in two to three visits. Bonding may take only one visit.

Any improvement in the smile can help one feel more confident, and bolster ones image. See your dentist for a “Smile Design” appointment to understand your options, risks and benefits, and to help develop realistic expectations and understand treatment time and expenses.