



Porcelain Veneers



by Dr. David Nelson (BDS)

It has not been too long since dentists were mostly relied upon for the relief of pain and the restoration of decayed teeth. Everyone dreaded a trip to the dentist. A visit was associated with pain and one frequently left a practice with teeth filled with silver mercury fillings.

With aesthetics being such an integral part of our lives today it was only a matter of time before dentistry became involved! Awakened to beauty by the media, the public became aware of the importance of a beautiful smile. The dental profession, conscious of the growing demand began the cosmetic dental revolution, which is growing at frantic pace!

The most prominent expression of joy is through laughter, so it follows that a beautiful smile should accompany this laughter. When we consider "aesthetic dentistry" within this framework, a well planned and beautifully achieved smile is without doubt one of the major elements in the concept of this total image of "well being".

In this article we shall be looking at one aspect of cosmetic dentistry – Porcelain Veneers. In future issues of Rejuvenate we shall be covering teeth whitening, dental implants and many other treatments that can be used to help create that smile you have always dreamed of!

A dental veneer is a thin piece of porcelain that is bonded to the front of a tooth to make it look better. They can be used on single teeth that have been damaged through decay or an accident or that are discoloured. They can also be used on multiple teeth for the same reasons or to help create that perfect smile whether it is the Hollywood look or a very natural beautiful appearance. With veneers the choice can be yours. With multiple veneers we can close spaces, straighten crooked teeth, disguise severe staining, repair chipped/worn teeth or just revamp that ageing smile. Veneers can also be used to cover teeth that have been severely stained that whitening/bleaching cannot completely remove. In some instances it can whiten teeth more effectively than bleaching. If it is only whiter teeth that you desire then I would recommend whitening rather than veneers. Veneers are a permanent procedure and there always needs to be some tooth preparation, although the amount of preparation depends on the position of teeth and the desired result.



What are Dental Veneers?

Essentially dental veneers are thin pieces of white glass/porcelain that are bonded to the front of your teeth to improve your smile.

The three most common types of veneer are the pressable ceramic, feldspathic porcelain and computer aided design/milling (CAD/CAM). These can then be given product or company names. Some of the more common names that consumers may be aware of are Lumineers, Cerec, Davinci or Fortress. The different types of veneer have some slight advantages/disadvantages over each other but generally all do exactly the same job. It is usually marketing that attracts the consumer to a certain type of veneer. Each dentist will have his preferred type of veneer and it is the interaction between the dentist and the laboratory which is very important. The dentist will assess suitability for veneers by carrying out a full smile analysis and then provide the clinical treatment necessary to craft a patient's smile. The role of the technician/ceramicist is equally important and it is their artistic flare that captures that perfect smile. It is therefore vital that your dentist is using a very high quality cosmetic ceramicist. The other option is that the cosmetic dentist is using one of the CAD/CAM systems such as Cerec and is able to mill the veneer for you straight away! This is a major advantage of Cerec but the aesthetic results may not be as good as achieved by the ceramicist in the lab. The Cerec veneers have subtle variations in colour applied after milling and this is very dependent on the skill of the person applying these final touches! If this is not done they can appear very monochromatic and lifeless!



before cosmetic veneers



after cosmetic veneers



How Does your Cosmetic Dentist Assess Suitability for Veneers and What Can I Expect?

Your dentist should treat every case using a full patient care approach. He will begin with a full clinical exam and take any necessary x-rays and photographs. This will be followed by an in depth smile analysis, where the dentist should look at hard tissues, soft tissues, lip position at rest and in full smile, incisal edge position, buccal corridor (space between teeth and cheeks) and gum aesthetics.

Any routine work should be carried out before the cosmetic reconstruction of the smile is started. Once the cosmetic analysis has been completed and any essential treatment carried out the next stage is to get a diagnostic mock up of what the final veneers will look like. This is where the dental technician will set up the final appearance of the veneers in wax on a model made from the patient's mouth. This stage is important as it allows the patient to see the expected final result.

The dentist also uses this to prepare a guide that shows how much tooth reduction is needed and the temporary veneers are made from this mock up. This means that the temporary veneers should look like the final veneers and gives the patient time to make any final alterations that they may want to make before the veneers are fabricated and fitted.

The teeth are then prepared with the aid of a "preparation" guide which has been made in conjunction with the mock-up. As discussed the temporaries are made using a mould taken from the mock-up and should look virtually the same as the final veneers. The temporaries will be in place for between two to three weeks before the final fit of the permanent veneers.

The whole process will take from between 1-2 months and cost between €300 and €1300 per veneer. It is important to have a full written estimate and treatment plan before proceeding with any cosmetic treatments.

The decision to go ahead with dental veneers should not be taken lightly. This is a permanent procedure and veneers

do not last for ever. On average you can expect to get between 8-10 years from a set of veneers. Veneers can also occasionally come away or fracture. If teeth need to be heavily prepped to obtain the correct aesthetic result then root canal treatment is also a possibility if a nerve in a tooth starts to die. It is also not a "fit and forget" procedure. It is important to maintain your veneers with regular reviews with your dentist and three monthly visits to the dental hygienist. All of this should be explained to a patient before an informed decision on treatment can be taken. Even with this doom and gloom a lot of my patients who have had veneer treatment when asked would they do it all over again have said that it has been a life changing procedure!

Dr David Nelson is the principal dentist at Bangor West Dental & Implant Clinic. He holds a specific qualification in Dental Implantology from the University of Warwick and has a special interest in dental implants and cosmetic treatments. Bangor West Dental & Implant Clinic is based near Belfast in Northern Ireland.

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