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London
City Dental

You've heard of the facelift. Here's the smile-lift

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Do you feel unhappy with the way your teeth look? Are they naturally crooked or discoloured, worn and chipped? Do you have a missing tooth? Or have they been heavily filled with silver-mercury fillings or even gold?

Many people have sound and healthy teeth which are nevertheless unattractive. What dentists call a 'smile-lift' can dramatically improve the appearance of your teeth – without harming them at all.



Before



After

Teeth can also be lightened, which fills the smile and supports the lips, often making them appear fuller. The result is a far more youthful and attractive look that radiates well-being, energy and attractiveness.

● When should you consider it?

A smile-lift could be right for you if your teeth show signs of dental ageing, if they are chipped and worn, darkened with age to a grey or yellow-brown colour or if there are multiple old fillings on show. These changes occur naturally, although some people are affected faster and earlier than others. Occasionally, younger people have unattractive teeth because of the misfortunes of nature or because they haven't looked after their teeth properly.

● Smile-lift?

We use the term 'smile-lift' to describe the procedures for enhancing and rejuvenating the smile by altering the appearance of the natural teeth. It is similar to what a facelift will do for the face. The great advantage is that the underlying natural tooth structure is preserved.

● What does the smile-lift achieve?

Creating new, outside surfaces to the teeth can restore or create a beautiful smile which everyone will assume is completely natural. Small teeth, that are barely visible when you talk or even smile, can be bulked out.

● What are the procedures?

There are two types of procedure: **Quartz Composite** (bonding) and **Porcelain** (veneering). In each case the dentist will bond a custom-fabricated, tooth coloured material to the front of the teeth. Most people have four to 12 upper-teeth treated – although some have lower-teeth done as well.

About a millimetre of front-surface enamel is removed from the natural tooth to prepare it for its new top surface. There is no need for a local anaesthetic because there will be little or no sensitivity. It is a conservative, non-destructive procedure.

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● Quartz composite

The dentist determines the colour of this plastic material in consultation with you. The dentist applies a mix of different shades of this initially soft, putty-like material to each tooth surface, mixing them as an artist would mix colours on a palette. The material is sculpted to create the shape of each tooth front. A special dental light hardens the material so that it can be further sculpted to the right size and shape. Finally, each tooth is polished.

What are the advantages and disadvantages of quartz composite?

The advantage is that it can be applied and completed in one visit, at relatively low cost. However, it is not as hard, strong or durable as the alternative (porcelain) and may need to be replaced after three to five years. Patients may decide to upgrade to the harder porcelain material. No additional tooth erosion is caused by replacement.

● Porcelain

This substance is stable and resilient, and even harder than natural tooth enamel. The dentist prepares the teeth as described above and then takes an impression (mould) of the teeth, in order to create an exact copy. Using this model replica, the dental technician then creates individual one-piece veneers out of different layers (and shades) of dental porcelain, according to the dentist's instructions. These individual porcelain 'fronts' are bonded onto the previously prepared tooth surfaces on a second visit to the dentist. During the interim 'waiting' period, temporary veneers can be placed, if necessary, for patient comfort.

What are the advantages and disadvantages of porcelain?

The hardness, durability and stability of porcelain, over time means that veneers will last without degrading or changing for 12-15 years, and possibly more. However there is a greater initial expense and the procedure will take two to three visits rather than one.

● Quartz composite or porcelain – which procedure is right for you?

The best advice is to have a frank consultation with your cosmetic dentist. Here you can talk over all the options – financial and others – in detail.

● What's the speed and cost of the smile-lift?

The cost and time it takes will depend on what you have done. As an example, imagine that you wish to rejuvenate your eight upper front teeth.

If you opt for Quartz Composite

The treatment can be completed in one visit of about four hours. The fee is around £2,000.

If you opt for Porcelain

The first visit (preparation) would be about 2 to 3 hours and the second (for fitting five to seven days later) would be about two hours. The fee is approximately £7,500.

In both cases, either no anaesthetic or very little local would be required. There would be no discomfort afterwards and you can return to work immediately.

● How will your new teeth look?

The best result gives you a natural appearance and blends well with your face. While you'll have the final say in the look that you want, be guided by the aesthetic sense of your dentist.

Remember – the true artistry and creativity in this kind of dentistry comes from reproducing the right imperfections. This gives the harmony, balance and authenticity of a great smile.

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