

Cosmetic dentistry

Summary

- Cosmetic dentistry can make substantial improvements to your teeth and your smile once you have achieved and are able to maintain good oral health.
- There are ways to restore or replace chipped, discoloured, deformed, crooked or missing teeth, although not all treatment options may be right for you
- You may need to be referred to a specialist for complex cases.
- Speak to your dentist or qualified oral health professional for information and advice.

You may feel self-conscious about your teeth if they are chipped, discoloured, deformed, crooked or missing. You may feel the need to cover your mouth every time you talk or laugh, or tend not to smile with your teeth in photos. Apart from affecting your self-confidence, having damaged teeth can also affect your oral health, particularly if chipped teeth are left untreated. Your dentist will be able to assess the complexity and severity of the problem. This may involve referral to dental specialists.

Cosmetic dentistry

Cosmetic dentistry refers to a range of dental procedures used to restore damaged teeth or replace missing teeth. Possible treatment options for each scenario are listed below, however not all options may be right for you.

| Chipped | Discoloured | Deformed | Missing | Crooked |
|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------|---------|
| Bonding | Composite | Composite | Dentures | Veneers |
| Composite | resign fillings | resign fillings | Bridges | Braces |
| resin fillings | Bleaching | Veneers | Implants | |
| | Veneers | Crowns | | |
| | Crowns | | | |

Bonding

Bonding is used in repairing chipped teeth with tooth-coloured fillings.

Composite resin (tooth-coloured) fillings

Composite fillings are often used to repair teeth, particularly teeth towards the front of the mouth that are visible. Silver fillings can be replaced with tooth-coloured ones if the fillings are visible when you smile. The decision to replace silver fillings for improved appearance should be balanced against the risk of nerve injury and structural damage to teeth which can occur when placing tooth-coloured fillings.

Bleaching (whitening)

Darker teeth can be lightened with special bleach, which can be applied in the dental chair or at home.

Customised plastic trays are made to fit specifically to the shape of your teeth and act as a reservoir for the bleach. After two weeks of night application at home, you should notice a significant difference in the brightness of your teeth. This treatment may not work for some types of discolouration. Bleaching should only be done under the guidance of a dentist with whom you can discuss risks such as tooth sensitivity.

Teeth that are discoloured following root canal treatment can sometimes have their original colour returned by

bleaching inside the tooth. This can only be carried out by a dentist.

Dentures

Dentures (false teeth) can replace wide spaces with multiple missing teeth. Dentures can be supported by teeth, gum and implants for stability.

Veneers

Approximately 0.5 millimetres thick, veneers are bonded to the front of the teeth to mask any discolouration. The equivalent depth of enamel will need to be removed from the front of the teeth to ensure even thickness. Although porcelain lasts longer than resin veneers, they can be easily damaged by habits such as fingernail chewing.

Crowns

Crowns are caps permanently bonded over a damaged tooth. Porcelain options are available to match the colour of adjacent teeth.

Bridges

Bridges are series of caps supported by tooth on either side to replace missing teeth. This is most effective when the gap is small and the teeth on either side of the gap require crowns.

Implants

Missing teeth can be replaced with dental implants. A titanium screw is fixed into the jaw which becomes fused with bone over time. Depending on the number of missing teeth and space available, the crown of tooth/teeth is then fitted.

Braces

Orthodontic treatment can straighten overcrowded or overlapping teeth. Orthodontics is a specialised branch of dentistry that corrects teeth and jaw problems with braces and plates to properly align the teeth.

Where to get help

- Your dentist
- **Australian Dental Association Victoria** (03) 8825 4600
- **Community dental clinic** - to find your local community clinic, tel. 1300 360 054 or search by postcode
- The **Royal Dental Hospital of Melbourne**
 - General enquiries or appointments Tel. (03) 9341 1000 or 1800 833 039 (outside Melbourne metro) 8.30 am to 5 pm, Monday to Friday
 - Dental emergencies Tel. 1300 360 054, 8.00 am to 8.30 pm, Monday to Friday, 8.30 am to 8.00 pm weekends and public holidays

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