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# Improving Your Smile

A bright and beautiful smile can give your confidence a boost. Your general dentist can perform a variety of cosmetic procedures to help you improve the look of your smile. Learn more about the cosmetic dentistry procedures that your dentist provides today!

## What is cosmetic dentistry?

Cosmetic dentistry refers to any dental work that improves the appearance of a person's teeth, gums, or bite.

## What are some common cosmetic procedures?

Common cosmetic procedures include bleaching, bonding, contouring and reshaping, crowns, and veneers.

### Bleaching

Bleaching is a chemical procedure used to whiten teeth, which often become discolored over time. Some people have their teeth bleached to remove stains, while others simply want a brighter smile. Your dentist may perform bleaching in the office or provide you with an at-home bleaching kit to be used under his or her supervision.

### Bonding

Bonding is the process of using a composite resin to fill in gaps between teeth or to whiten them. Bonding also may be used to correct chipped teeth or minor decay. The bonding procedure may be completed in a single office visit, and

the results often last for several years, although some bonding resins are more susceptible to staining or chipping than other restoration materials.

### Contouring and reshaping

Often combined with bonding, contouring and reshaping procedures are used to correct crooked, chipped, irregularly shaped, or overlapping teeth. Contouring and reshaping procedures can alter the teeth's length, shape, or position; contouring also can be used to improve bite. Contouring and reshaping procedures may be completed in a single visit and are ideal for patients with normal, healthy teeth who want subtle changes to their smiles.

### Crowns

Also known as caps, crowns are placed over a tooth to create a normal appearance. Crowns can be used to restore fractured, misshapen, or discolored teeth, or those with significant structure loss. Crowns have a longer life expectancy than other cosmetic restorations, but they also are more expensive and time-consuming to place, requiring more than one office visit. Crowns are generally used in cases in which other cosmetic procedures would not be effective.

### Veneers

Veneers are thin pieces of porcelain or plastic placed over the front of teeth to change their color or shape. In addition



to improving teeth with uneven surfaces, veneers can be used to correct chipped, discolored, oddly shaped, unevenly spaced, or crooked teeth. Placement of veneers often requires more than one office visit, but they are less expensive than crowns and have better color stability and a longer life expectancy than bonding restorations.

## Which procedure is right for me?

The condition of your teeth and your desired results will determine which cosmetic procedures are best for you. Your dentist can answer your questions and make recommendations on how best to improve your smile.

For more information about cosmetic dentistry procedures, speak with your general dentist and visit [KnowYourTeeth.com](http://KnowYourTeeth.com).



## KnowYourTeeth.com

Brought to you by the Academy of General Dentistry (AGD), this website answers important dental health questions, offers the latest information on current treatments, provides tips for first-rate oral hygiene, and helps visitors find highly qualified general dentists near where they live.

**The AGD is a member of the Partnership for Healthy Mouths, Healthy Lives, a first-of-its-kind national dental coalition composed of 37 leading dental health organizations. Look for more information about the Kids' Healthy Mouths campaign at [www.2min2x.org](http://www.2min2x.org).**

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