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### **Cosmetic Options**

Right or wrong we often make assumptions about people based on what they wear, how they speak, or their posture. A confident, attractive smile also plays an important role in a person's image. When you look good, you feel good, and if you're pleased with your smile, you're more likely to wear it! If the real you is hiding behind an unattractive smile, you may want to consult with your dentist about your cosmetic options. Cosmetic dentistry refers to a host of dental treatments designed to enhance the smile and correct chipped, cracked, discolored, and unevenly spaced teeth. There are many cosmetic options available today including whitening, veneers and all-ceramic crowns, bonding, orthodontic treatment (braces), and tooth-colored fillings and inlays.

There are two standard methods of professionally whitening the teeth. Both use a peroxide-based gel by either placing the gel in a custom-made tray and bleaching one to two hours a day at home or by an in-office treatment that usually takes about an hour. Existing porcelain restorations or composite (bonded fillings) will not bleach, and teeth with heavy intrinsic stains such as those caused by tetracycline sometimes don't lighten well. In these cases veneers or all-ceramic crowns may be considered.

A veneer is a porcelain or ceramic facing that is "glued" over the front of the tooth. Veneers can close spaces between teeth and make crooked teeth look straight as well. Composite "bonding" is another choice for covering the surface of the front teeth and is less expensive than porcelain veneers but typically does not last as long and sometimes does not look as natural. When teeth are severely crowded or if there are existing crowns with exposed, dark margins, all-ceramic crowns may be a better option. These types of crowns eliminate the "black line" you see at the gumline in traditional porcelain-fused-to-metal crowns.

More and more adults have been enhancing their smiles by getting braces. Orthodontics can not only make your smile more beautiful but also correct problems with your bite. Braces may even be recommended before placement of veneers or other cosmetic restorations to improve a "bad bite" and help your new restorations last longer.

Amalgam, or silver fillings, can make teeth look dark or gray, and replacing them with tooth-colored restorations such as composite fillings or ceramic inlays can make teeth look healthier and brighter. In cases of large silver fillings, restoring with crowns may be necessary.

There are so many options available today for getting a beautiful, natural-looking smile. Don't hide behind those crooked, discolored, or chipped teeth. Let the real you shine by seeing your dentist and finding out how you can improve your smile!