

Straight Talk on Straight Teeth

Do you want beautiful straight teeth for your child or yourself? Have you ever wondered which is the best way to achieve a great smile? Well, here's a discussion of various ways with their individual pro's and con's.

There are some basic questions that need to be considered. How old is the patient? Is the problem too much or too little space? Is there a significant difference in sizes of the two jaws? What does the profile look like? How much gum shows when smiling? Are the teeth intact or are there lots of cavities, discolorations, or fillings? How much time are we willing to take?

Now let's take a look at each of several options. Please note that for options involving moving teeth, retainers (either removable or bonded) must be used indefinitely to prevent some relapse.

Braces- Braces are usually the best bet for most teenagers and for those adults with moderate to severe space or crowding problems. There are different systems of braces that work differently. While great results are achievable with all systems, the one I utilize is often more comfortable and faster than the most commonly used system.

Invisalign- This is a great option for older teens or adults who want to move their teeth without braces. Clear aligners are removable for eating and brushing. A new aligner is put into use every two weeks until the treatment is done. Invisalign works great for mild to moderate problems, but is less desirable for complex ones. We have been very pleased with the success of the Invisalign on our patients.

Bonding- If you have just a little space between your front two teeth, or elsewhere, it is very easy and relatively inexpensive to close the space with bonded composite resin. It won't last forever, but it's no big deal to replace it years later.

Veneers- Are you an adult desiring instant gratification? The makeovers you see on TV usually involve 6-10 veneers on at least the upper teeth, and some times on the lower too. Veneers be made of porcelain or composite resin and often involve some reshaping of the teeth before they are bonded into place. The advantages are speed and the ability to change the color and shape of the teeth. The disadvantages are the cost and the fact that they will usually have to be replaced one or more times during an average lifetime. Costs vary widely, but I assure you they usually cost less in Big Spring than in Dallas or Houston.

Crowns (caps) and bridges- Many of the TV makeovers involve crowns or bridges. These, like veneers, make an immediate change. Crowns are done when the teeth are badly decayed, worn, or full of fillings. Bridges replace one or several missing teeth and are bonded to the adjacent teeth. With the newer all porcelain systems, the cosmetics with crowns and bridges can be just as beautiful as veneers.

That summarizes the basic options. Sometimes the best option involves a combination of cosmetic therapies. If you're unhappy with your smile talk with a dentist, preferably one who can offer you all of these options.