

# the smilefile

Sydney cosmetic dentist **Dr Michael Tam** answers commonly asked questions about new technology for beautiful teeth.

### Why is a beautiful smile important?

Your smile is unique. It tells the world about you, fosters communication and goodwill, and indicates vitality, happiness, confidence, success and friendship. It will improve your personal and professional relationships and makes a positive, powerful and memorable statement to everyone you meet.

### I want to improve crooked, dark or misshapen teeth. What are my options?

There are many options, ranging from composite or porcelain veneers, orthodontics, simple or 'power tooth whitening' and maybe even no treatment at all. A cosmetic dentist should start with a comprehensive smile assessment, attain correct diagnostic records and use a

#### case study 1



**BEFORE** Patient presented with small teeth with displeasing gaps and colour.



**AFTER** Improved appearance with a combination of power tooth whitening and eight veneers on the front upper teeth by Dr Tam.



**BEFORE**



**AFTER**



**BEFORE**



**AFTER**

'smile preview' computer simulation as the basis for a detailed discussion about treatment planning and realistic outcomes. You should be told about what each procedure involves, scheduling requirements and costs. You should also receive a full explanation of possible risks and long-term expectations.

### What objectives should my cosmetic dentist have?

That mainly depends on you, as everyone has individual goals and each mouth is different. During your initial smile assessment, your cosmetic dentist may suggest lengthening teeth, changing their shape or shades, widening the buccal corridor/shoulder areas so your teeth fill your mouth from side to side, 'feminising' your smile or even 'rejuvenating' your smile. It may be as simple as moving the midline a few millimetres left or right to enable a more central vertical reference with the face, or just closing a gap.

### What is the latest porcelain technology?

The advantage of porcelain over other restorative materials is that it is longer lasting and more natural looking. It has a more life-like translucency and is virtually indistinguishable from the natural tooth. It is also a very strong material.

The technology behind all Procera crowns, veneers, bridges or even 'cosmetic implant crowns' is a CAD/CAM designed zirconia or densely sintered aluminium oxide framework.

The technical aspects and parameters of the prepared tooth are scanned and emailed over to Sweden or North America, where the framework of the crown is made and then sent back to the ceramist, who will layer and furnace the final porcelain onto the crown. It offers longevity, is biocompatible with surrounding tissues and may be used in esthetically challenging circumstances. It allows maximum fit and unsurpassed personalised aesthetics.

The IPS Empress System is a leucite-reinforced, all-ceramic material with a layering and customised shading technique used to create full crowns, inlays, onlays and veneers.

Empress has enamel-like wear characteristics and is kind to existing, natural dentition. There is no metal or inner core, so light is allowed to transmit through, just as with real teeth. It allows true-to-nature restorations and has natural vitality.

Empress gains its strength through bonding. The results are very strong crowns, veneers, inlays and onlays that are biocompatible with the surrounding tissues. Since they are custom-layered and handmade, they allow precise shading and personalisation. The ceramist has a vital role in the success of the final smile.

### What will my cosmetic dentist be looking at when suggesting treatments?

Teeth fit into the face, not just into the mouth, and the following cosmetic criteria are crucial: midlines, vertical and horizontal reference planes, facial symmetry and harmony, lips (shape, bulk and symmetry), smile line, gum lines and gum display, 'the bite' and cant (the general horizontal slant of the plane of the teeth). Also the amount of teeth displayed with lips at rest and when smiling, the condition of existing fillings or crowns, spacing, female-looking and male-looking teeth.

'Axial inclination' means the vertical alignment of teeth. They should angle downwards and inwards towards the navel. Teeth size (height and width), teeth proportion, overall and individual tooth colour are also important.

### Will I be able to see what I'll look like before we start any treatment?

There are computer simulation programs that will allow a patient to visualise their new smile before work begins.

All it takes is a good digital camera, a few mouse clicks and the cosmetic dentist should be able to place on the computer screen a digital before and after – a 'new smile preview'.

### How do I find a good cosmetic dentist?

Take your time. Cosmetic dentistry is normally an elective procedure and not an emergency. For something as important as this, research time up-front will pay great dividends towards your understanding and emotional comfort later.

It is important to check that the cosmetic dentist you are considering:

- Performs your chosen procedure on more than a regular basis
- Has before and after albums, showing

clinical expertise

- Offers value for money
- Is honest in their assessment of your needs and their ability to meet your expectations
- Has an artistic eye. Excellent cosmetic dentistry requires a highly sophisticated artistic sense. Your dentist must have a clear vision of what is possible, as well as being able to communicate well with the cosmetic ceramist
- Takes a multi-discipline approach. The cosmetic dentist must utilise a network of specialists and, if necessary, refer to them in consultation with you
- Has a good chair-side manner, so you're comfortable and relaxed
- Gives you a good gut feeling. Do you like the appearance and feel of the practice? Are the staff professional and caring? Is the team well-trained?
- Explains all options, including any possible risks and complications
- Is committed to and passionate about continuous education in the field
- Belongs to affiliations and associations, is on the lecture circuit or regularly attends aesthetic updates locally and overseas. **acsm**

*Dr Michael Tam has performed cosmetic dental procedures in Channel Seven's 'The Body Specialists' on Thursday nights. During his appearances he has discussed in-chair tooth whitening systems and performed smile design and porcelain veneers treatment for two patients.*

### case study 2



**BEFORE** Patient presented with black holes, worn down and discoloured teeth.



**AFTER** A more youthful appearance with a full mouth rehabilitation with porcelain crowns and porcelain veneers by Dr Tam.



**BEFORE**



**AFTER**



**BEFORE**



**AFTER**