

teeth

smile and the world smiles with you



Sydney cosmetic dentist **Dr Michael Tam** helped change the lives of two different women by giving them something to smile about. Lauren Alexander reports.

Case study 1

Sydney cosmetic dentist Dr Michael Tam's 20-year-old patient says her teeth detracted from her self-confidence and she made conscious effort to hide them in social situations. 'I never really smiled with my mouth open,' she says.

She approached several cosmetic dentists but says it wasn't until she saw Dr Tam that she felt she had found someone who could transform her small, gappy, rather yellow upper teeth into an attractive smile.

'He was very assured and he knew exactly what I needed. He explained the procedures that would fix my teeth and showed me before and after photographs of other patients he had treated,' she says.

Dr Tam's solution was to build up the teeth of her upper jaw with a combination of crowns and veneers in a lighter shade of her natural tooth colour. This process required three visits over about a month: the first to have moulds taken, the second to fit the temporaries and modify the gum line so the final crowns and veneers would be natural looking. She says this involved minor discomfort but the rest of the process was painless.

During her third visit the temporaries were removed and her final crowns and veneers fitted. 'They looked amazing,' she says. 'They were comfortable straightaway and didn't take any getting used to. I could talk normally and eat normally as if they had always been there.'

She says all her friends and family noticed her new smile. 'It was all very positive,' she says. 'I think teeth are very important to overall appearance. I'm smiling with my mouth open now.'



BEFORE

AFTER combination of tooth whitening, opening bite and porcelain work by Dr Tam

The smile plays a fundamental role in human relationships. Although the saying is to never judge a book by its cover, a person is judged by his or her smile, whether it is done consciously or not.

Sydney cosmetic dentist Dr Michael Tam says, 'First impressions are often based on your smile, with the world assessing your friendliness, intelligence, personality and even social status based on their initial impression.'

There's no question that stained or discoloured teeth are aesthetically unappealing. On a subconscious level, people perceive stained or discoloured teeth as an indication of poor health, making a person less attractive to prospective mates. On a conscious level, such teeth might be perceived as an indicator of poor hygiene, even if the cause is genetic, and they can add years to an otherwise youthful face.

Porcelain veneers are an increasingly popular option for treating discoloured, chipped, worn or misshapen teeth. The veneers are thin, semi-translucent facings which are bonded to the front of each tooth to give the appearance of new teeth. They are best suited to minor tooth imperfections rather than major cosmetic issues.

'Improving your teeth can boost your confidence, and your new smile can make a positive, powerful and memorable statement to everyone you meet,' Dr Tam explains.

'If a tooth is fractured, has had root canal therapy or a portion of its structure has been lost through decay, a full crown may be needed,' he says.

'Dental crowns encase the entire visible part of the tooth, giving a new outer surface. Crowns are made from all-ceramic materials, making them strong and durable while giving a natural-looking appearance.' **acsm**

Case study 2

This 30-year-old woman had undergone an ordeal eight years ago to get crowns, bridgework and veneers. She was very unhappy with the result but after having to make three return trips to correct unsuccessful dental work, she says she was reluctant to go back to a dentist again.

A friend's recommendation convinced her to see Dr Tam about having the unsatisfactory porcelain work replaced. 'I was petrified but I wanted a brighter, whiter smile,' she explains.

Dr Tam agreed with her about the colour and quality of her dental work. The colour was dingy and the metal backing showed at the edges of her teeth at the gum line. 'It was obvious when I opened my mouth and I had my head tipped back,' she says. 'He understood what was wrong with my dental work and had a solution for everything I wasn't happy with.'

She says Dr Tam took her through the whole procedure, explaining what he could do and showed her photographs of his past work. 'The quality of his results gave me the confidence to go ahead and get the replacements done.'

She had a whitening procedure and castings taken for the porcelain replacements, then temporary replacements to wear while the permanent ones were being made in the laboratory.

Although she had been anxious about the perceived pain, she braved the procedure with local anaesthetic only. 'I was told I wouldn't feel a thing and I didn't.'

The permanent porcelain work was custom-fitted by the technician at the lab and Dr Tam's patient was very impressed with both the level of service and the final result. 'He did the most amazing job,' she says. 'There's nothing better than having a great smile – it makes all the difference to your confidence.'



BEFORE

AFTER Combination of tooth whitening and porcelain work by Dr Tam