

## teeth

# a thin veneer

Porcelain veneers can help patients achieve a bright smile, Sydney cosmetic dentist **Dr Michael Tam** tells Lauren Alexander.

Whether they are 16 or 60, many people want whiter and brighter smiles. Stained or discoloured teeth can add to the appearance of ageing and many patients realise that an improved smile will enhance the effect of other facial rejuvenation treatments.

Porcelain veneers are becoming an increasingly popular option to treat discoloured teeth, as well as those that are chipped, worn or misshapen, according to Sydney cosmetic dentist Dr Michael Tam.

'If you are unhappy with your teeth, porcelain veneers may be a simple solution,' he says. 'Improving your teeth can boost your confidence, and your new smile can make a positive, powerful and memorable statement to everyone you meet.'

The consultation process for a patient considering porcelain veneers begins with addressing factors such as diagnostic records. The cosmetic dentist will also use digital imaging software to make sure patients have an idea of the end result. The dentist should also discuss issues

### Case study 1

Zoe went to Dr Tam seeking help with her two-toned teeth, particularly her front two teeth. 'They had white dots and they weren't well aligned,' she explains. 'I was very self-conscious and didn't like to show my teeth when I smiled.'

Dr Tam advised Zoe to have porcelain veneers to correct her smile. During the initial sessions, they chose the porcelains that best suited Zoe's teeth and she was fitted with temporary veneers while her

porcelain veneers were being made. 'The temporaries gave me an idea of what it would look like, and I was very happy with the temporary ones,' Ten days later, Zoe had the actual procedure performed with little discomfort at Dr Tam's surgery. 'The procedure was fine. Afterwards I had to get used to the veneers in the mouth, but I felt so much more confident about my smile. Now I smile all the time. It has made me feel like a new person.'



BEFORE



AFTER cosmetic dentistry by Dr Tam



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such as the patient's wishes, treatment planning and outcomes. The patient should also be offered information on what is involved in the procedure, scheduling requirements, costs and possible risks and complications.

Porcelain veneers are one of the most effective methods of minor tooth correction, according to Dr Tam.

'Porcelain veneers have two key advantages over other types of bonding,' he says. 'Firstly, they are more translucent than other options such as tooth-coloured filling material, and their translucency gives them a very natural appearance because it mimics the effect of enamel. Secondly, porcelain is stain-resistant while other bonding options are not.'

As the name suggests, porcelain 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. Consultation with a dentist will determine

whether a patient will benefit from porcelain veneers.

'In certain situations, porcelain veneers are not an appropriate treatment,' Dr Tam says. 'This includes when tooth structure has been lost and the tooth is therefore unstable, or when there is an inadequate amount of enamel for veneers to be bonded to. If the patient's teeth are decayed, or if there is any active gum disease, this will need to be treated before any dental work can be performed. 'People who constantly grind their teeth are also unsuitable candidates as this can weaken the veneers,' he adds.

In cases where the veneer does come off or breaks, a new veneer is made or the original is reapplied. They can last over 10 years when care is taken, which includes brushing and flossing daily and avoiding activities such as grinding the teeth and biting the fingernails or any other hard objects – all worth avoiding for preserving the investment in one's smile. **acsm**

## Case study 2

Heidi split one of her teeth trying to open a plastic package. When she consulted Dr Tam, he suggested a porcelain veneer to correct her smile.

'I'd been thinking about some cosmetic dentistry for a while and this accident was the impetus. Within the month of splitting open my teeth I was fitted with the porcelain veneers,' she explains.

Heidi fitted the consultations around her work travel schedule, then wore temporary veneers, prior to having the actual porcelain veneers fitted at Dr Tam's surgery. She also had her teeth whitened to finish off her new look.

'It was a lengthy procedure but I was very happy with the result. Now I have a brand new smile, which is lovely,' she says.



**BEFORE**



**AFTER cosmetic dentistry by Dr Tam**



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