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GEMS TO BRIGHTEN PEARLY WHITES; [SPORTS FINAL Edition]

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Full Text (399 words)

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It's no secret that a gleaming smile can make or break your looks, and even the most subtle change in your smile can make a dramatic difference in the way you look and feel about yourself.

You no longer have to settle for stained, chipped, or misshapen teeth, or even old, unattractive crowns or veneers. You now have choices that can help you smile with confidence even if you were not blessed with naturally beautiful teeth.

"The tools of modern dental work include lasers to carve new, more attractive gum lines, tooth bleaching and the ultimate - porcelain veneers for a dazzling white smile," says Manhattan cosmetic dentist Dr. Sandip Sachar.

Porcelain veneers are ultrathin shells of ceramic material, which are bonded to the front of teeth to change their size or shape. These are carefully crafted in the laboratory to attain desired results.

In some cases, crowns (caps) might be a better option than veneers, according to Sachar.

Crowns cover the entire tooth, not just the front, and are also manufactured in laboratories.

Due to advances in digital technology, veneers (or crowns) can be an identical color match for the rest of your teeth so that they are virtually unnoticeable.

In the past, dentists and laboratory technicians relied on the human eye to determine tooth shade in dental work.

Today, a colorimeter allows the dentist to digitally capture the precise color image of the patient's teeth regardless of the lighting in the dental office, and communicate the accurate tooth shades to the laboratory, thereby eliminating the subjectivity of color analysis. The result is a perfect color match and a natural-looking smile.

For those with dark, dull or heavily stained teeth, deep bleaching may be the solution.

This procedure involves a combination of in-office laser whitening sessions and at-home whitening. The laser is first used to condition the teeth. Then custom-fitted trays are made and the patient must wear these trays with a gel as instructed for seven to 14 days.

Then a second session of in-office laser bleaching is conducted, and the procedure is complete.

"The results are outstanding," says Sachar.

However, for patients with only mild to moderate staining of teeth, the at-home whitening alone (or one laser-session alone) may be all that is required to see results.

Dr. Rock Positano, M.S., M.P.H., D.P.M., is on the staff of the Weill Medical College of Cornell University.

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