



METROPOLITAN DENVER
DENTAL SOCIETY

YOUR COMMUNITY PARTNERS IN ORAL HEALTH

Metropolitan Denver Dental Society

3690 South Yosemite Street, Suite 200, Denver, CO 80237

PHONE: (303) 488-9700 FAX: (303) 488-0177 E-MAIL: pr@mddsdentist.com

www.mddsdentist.com

Cosmetic Dentistry

Options for improving a smile

Q&A

What causes discolored teeth?

There are many possible causes. Trauma to a tooth can cause discoloration. Severe illness during tooth development can discolor areas of teeth because of disruptions in tooth development. Additionally, an entire tooth might discolor if exposed to certain medicines or minerals during development. Lastly, poor oral hygiene, especially during orthodontic therapy, can lead to discolored areas on teeth as well.

How do you treat discolored spots on teeth?

A technique called microabrasion can improve the appearance of teeth with discolored areas. In this treatment, the pediatric dentist removes microscopic bits of discolored tooth enamel with an abrasive and a mild acid.

Microabrasion is a conservative treatment, usually comfortable for the patient. It works best on surface discoloration.

Are there any limitations to bonding or veneers?

Yes, there are some limitations. Although the treatments are conservative, they require some loss of tooth enamel. Bonded teeth and veneers are not as strong as the original tooth structure. Nail biting, hard foods, and sports accidents can damage them. They must be maintained with good oral hygiene and regular dental visits.

Bleaching

Bleaching is a procedure to brighten teeth that are discolored, stained or injured. The procedure is performed on natural teeth, even ones that have had root canal treatment. There are two types of procedures: chairside bleaching, which may be done entirely in the dental office, and home-use tray bleaching, a system dispensed by the dentist for a patient to use at home. Chairside bleaching typically takes from 30 minutes to one hour per visit. A chemical solution called an oxidizing agent is applied to the teeth, and a special light is used to help activate this agent. Generally, three to four visits to the dental office are necessary to complete the treatment. For home-use bleaching, your dentist makes a custom-fitted tray to hold a bleaching gel. The length of time the tray is worn each day, and the duration of the treatment plan, may vary. Be sure to follow your dentist's directions carefully when using a home-use bleaching product. Some people with certain dental conditions may not be good candidates for bleaching.

Enamel Shaping

Enamel shaping is a process of shaping or contouring natural teeth to improve their overall appearance. It may be used to correct teeth that are slightly crowded or uneven or when certain teeth appear too long. Enamel shaping involves modifying teeth by removing or contouring enamel. The process, which is often combined with bonding, is usually quick and comfortable. Anesthesia is usually not necessary. Results can be seen immediately.

Bonding

Bonding is a procedure in which tooth-colored materials are attached, or bonded, to a tooth surface. Bonding can improve the appearance of teeth that are chipped, broken, cracked, stained or have gaps. It is also used to protect exposed tooth roots as a result of gum recession and to fill small cavities. The bonding process involves an etching solution that enables the bonding material to adhere to the tooth surface. The bonding material is composite resin, a plastic material made of resin and a filler substance such as glass. Various color resins are carefully blended to match the existing tooth. The composite resin is applied to the tooth, contoured by the dentist into the proper shape, and hardened using a special light or chemical process. The tooth is then smoothed and polished to look natural. Bonding may not require the use of anesthesia or drilling.

Veneers

Veneers can help brighten front teeth that can't be whitened. Veneers are used to correct spaces between the front teeth or to fix teeth that are poorly shaped or slightly crooked. Veneers are thin, custom-made shells that your dentist bonds to the teeth in a simple, comfortable procedure that requires just a few appointments. Veneers are made from composite resins, acrylic material, or porcelain. Your dentist will help you choose which material is best for you, based on durability, stain resistance and a natural look. A small amount of enamel is removed from the teeth, so that the teeth won't look or feel bulky when the veneers are attached. After the enamel is reduced, the dentist makes an impression of the prepared teeth. A model is then made to ensure that the veneers will be compatible with your bite. Then the teeth are etched and rinsed, and the veneers are applied with adhesive bonding. You must take proper care of veneers to help protect from dislodging or decay developing on the tooth.