

BEAUTY

Fancy Fangs

- Sharp-Looking Pearlies -

Many are blessed with a straight white set of chompers, but most of us could use some help.

By Heather Clisby

Smilng is the second best thing to do with one's lips – it's that welcoming sign that says: "The lights are on and someone is definitely home."

Many are blessed with a straight white set of chompers, but most of us could use some help. Thankfully, there's plenty of it around. Whitening strips from the corner drugstore? Bleaching at the dentist? Porcelain veneers? What's best for you may depend on the state of the enamel in your head. Perhaps you've got spaces in between your teeth, chipped teeth, crooked teeth, unsightly stains or nagging discolorations. Truth be told, it doesn't have to be that way.

Tooth whitening is a fairly simple procedure that uses hydrogen peroxide to lighten discoloration of the enamel and dentin. While a sudden onslaught of recent advertising touts the benefits of whitening toothpastes and strips, the results are only temporary. The pastes have low peroxide levels but can prevent further yellowing of the teeth. The strips work fine but can bleach unevenly.

For a more complete and longer lasting whitening effect, a dentist must get involved. The initial visit entails being fitted for clear plastic "trays." At home, the patient fills the trays with whitening gel and wears them over the teeth for 50-70 minutes per day for one to two weeks. The going rate for this setup runs about \$300-\$500. Some patients experience sensitivity to temperature for a few days after treatment begins.

The results of this home procedure can last for years, with occasional touch-ups, though tea/coffee drinkers, smokers and red wine enthusiasts may have to maintain more frequently. For those who took the common antibiotic tetracycline as a child, you may have some gray bands to contend with, in which case, you may need to think beyond bleaching.

Dr. David Blende, D.D.S., is a tall, gentle soul who wears his passion for this toothy profession on his well-scrubbed

sleeve. The son of a country doctor, he's one of the lucky folks who actually glows from having located his proper destiny. "A good dentist should have some shades of obsessive/compulsive disorder," he says, straight-faced, "which I do." It's a tight happy office that prides itself on demonstrating a deep understanding and patience for dental-phobics in particular, so scaredy-cats, come on down.

Specializing in porcelain veneers, Blende keeps a serious Russian ceramicist on-site; Vladimir Pronin is a tight-lipped, highly focused fellow who also takes his work very seriously. Knowing that this is the guy who is building your smile, more or less, such qualities are comforting.

Using novocaine and local anesthetic, the whole veneer process is completed in two visits over a two-week period. The individual tooth is shaved a bit and the porcelain veneer is then bonded to the tooth.

Blende and his crew are tightly focused on their mission – mainly aesthetics and/or dental-phobics. "Many of our cases are done under a general anesthesia," he says. A framed certificate from the Anxiety Disorders Association of

America hangs handily on the wall behind him. "In fact, one in seven people are dental-phobics." New patients are given a "Dental Anxiety Scale" to fill out, including such questions as "If you had to go to the dentist tomorrow, how would you feel about it?"

While Blende has been doing veneers for over 20 years, helping people overcome their fears and difficulties seems a personal mission for him and his crew. In fact, Blende's angelic assistant, Victoria, becomes instantly teary when trying to describe the gratitude patients and their families have expressed over the years. Alzheimer's patients, infants, cerebral palsy and Parkinson's sufferers, can all find dental sanctuary here.



Dr. David Blende, D.D.S.