



Veneers, Bonding, Bleaching & Composite Fillings

A Guide for Patients

A combination of lifestyle and personal factors can result in teeth showing various faults or blemishes over the years. Your dentist can offer a variety of modern treatments to improve the appearance of your teeth and smile.

Changes in the appearance of teeth can be due to:

- inherited traits – some people have a family history of dental irregularities such as gaps, misaligned teeth, spots or blemishes
- staining that can result from certain foods or beverages, especially tea, coffee and cola
- smoking, which causes discolouration of teeth
- the use of some antibiotics in children, which can lead to permanent colour changes in permanent teeth
- chips or cracks, which may be due to trauma such as sporting injuries or accidents
- broken-down restorations, and age.

Procedures

- **Veneers:** These cover the front teeth and can significantly improve the appearance of your teeth and smile.
- **Bonding:** Bonding can correct blemishes and irregularities of the front teeth without removing tooth structure.
- **Bleaching:** This is a method used to whiten teeth.
- **Tooth-coloured composite fillings:** These can be an alternative to amalgam fillings in many cases.
- **Inlays and onlays:** These repair larger cracks or cavities in the chewing surfaces of the back teeth, increasing their strength while maintaining their appearance.

PORCELAIN VENEERS

These are thin, tooth-coloured porcelain (ceramic) shells carefully crafted to bond to and cover the front of unsightly teeth. They are a more conservative treatment than a crown and can often be used as an alternative if the underlying tooth is strong and healthy.

Veneers are excellent for treating chipped, discoloured, slightly misaligned or misshapen teeth or gaps between the teeth, especially if these defects affect the front teeth. A tooth that is too small or has irregularities can be successfully treated with a veneer.

Two or three visits to your dentist

will usually be required to prepare the teeth and fit the veneers. Your dentist will discuss your needs with you and plan the treatment that suits you best.

An appointment typically takes from one to two hours depending on the number of teeth to be treated. To prepare each tooth, your dentist will remove a thin layer, about the thickness of a fingernail, from the surface of the tooth. This allows room for the veneer to be glued into place later. A local anaesthetic may be required during this step. An impression is taken of your teeth and sent to a dental ceramist, who manufactures the veneers to fit your teeth.

Cementing of the new veneers occurs

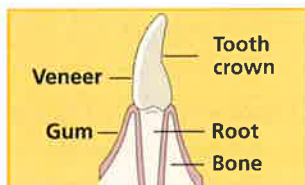
at the next appointment and may take a few hours. Your dentist will check on the colour and fit before finally bonding them into place. The teeth are cleaned with a chemical that helps bond the veneer to the tooth. After a cement is placed between the veneer and your tooth, a light beam activates the cement to bond the veneer firmly.

Colour can be altered by using varying shades of cement, so it is important that you discuss any changes you require before the final cementing is done. Once the veneer is bonded to the teeth, the colour cannot be changed. After the veneer has been bonded, it is trimmed and polished.

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Rear view of veneers for the front teeth, showing shape and structure.



The veneer is bonded to the front surface of the tooth.



Discoloured, misshapen or damaged teeth (left) can be effectively covered by veneers (right).



Composite fillings can be an alternative to amalgam fillings. They are made of a plastic material mixed with small glass particles and are tooth coloured, rather than silver. They are suitable for repairing both the front and the back teeth.

After preparing the tooth, your dentist will place layers of the composite filling into the area to be repaired. Each layer of the composite material is hardened by exposure to a special light.

Once the cavity or defect is filled, your dentist can trim the composite to fit the tooth and then polish it to reduce discolouration or staining.

Advantages of composite fillings

- Composite fillings are more attractive than amalgam fillings.
- Teeth filled with composite material tend to be stronger, as it bonds to the surrounding tooth, while a tooth filled with amalgam may sometimes be weaker.

Inlays & Onlays

Inlays

Inlays are fillings that were traditionally made of gold but now are often made of porcelain, ceramic or composite material. They are used to repair moderately damaged back teeth and need to be extremely strong to withstand the grinding pressures of these teeth.

Inlays are glued into place and are contained within the cusp tips of the tooth. A special glue is used to increase the strength of the bond.

Onlays

Made of the same materials as inlays, an onlay is a more extensive repair that covers the tooth cusps.

An onlay is much stronger than any other type of filling and actually increases the strength of the tooth.

Application of inlays and onlays

The fitting of inlays and onlays usually requires two dental visits.

The first visit involves removing the old filling or the decayed area and preparing the surface for the new filling. An impression is made of the area and sent to the dental laboratory so the inlay or onlay can be constructed. A temporary cover or filling is applied until the next visit.

At the second visit, the temporary

cover or filling is removed and the new inlay or onlay is fitted. Your dentist will ensure that it is a perfect fit and does not interfere with your bite. It is then bonded into place with a powerful glue and polished.

Advantages of inlays and onlays

- Strength is one of the major advantages of inlays and onlays. Fillings usually weaken a tooth, but because inlays and onlays are bonded directly into the tooth, they can increase the overall strength of the tooth.
- Porcelains, ceramics and composite material can be made in colours to match natural teeth.
- They are durable and may last 10 years or more, unless they get decay under them.
- In some cases, they are a good alternative to the more complex crown.



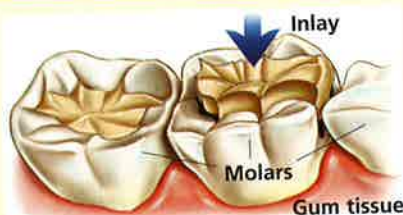
Amalgam fillings (left) can be replaced by composite fillings (right).

- Composite fillings can be fitted into very small holes, so less drilling is needed in preparation for the fillings.
- These types of fillings can help insulate the tooth from major temperature changes.

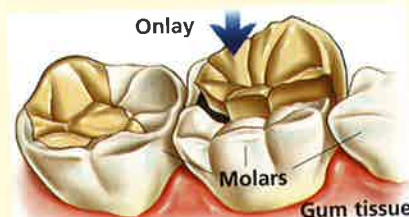
Disadvantages of composite fillings

- Composite fillings take slightly longer to place than amalgam, and the technique your dentist uses is more complex.

- Composites are usually more expensive than amalgam.
- If used in larger cavities, composite fillings can wear out sooner than amalgam fillings. However, this may not occur if they are used in smaller cavities.
- A tooth filled with composite material may be sensitive for a time after the procedure.
- Some foods and drinks can stain composite fillings.



Inlays are used to repair moderately damaged back teeth and need to be extremely strong.



An onlay is a more extensive repair that covers the tooth cusps.

Disadvantages of inlays and onlays

- Inlays and onlays can be costly due to the high-quality materials used in their manufacture and the precision required in their fitting.
- They require removal of tooth material.

Costs of Treatment

Your dentist will advise you about treatment costs, and you should ask for an estimate of fees. Remember, this is only an estimate because the actual treatment may differ from that proposed. The final cost may be different from the original estimate. Discuss costs before treatment rather than afterwards.

YOUR DENTIST

