

Whiter teeth? A celebrity smile? You got it.

BY APRIL WORTHAM | ILLUSTRATION BY ANTHONY BRATINA | PHOTOS BY MICHELLE WILLIAMS

Think you know your reality television? Take this quiz: When producers of ABC's "Extreme Makeover" are selecting candidates for a total body overhaul, what feature do they look at most closely — weight, skin, nose or teeth?

The answer? Teeth. That's because Hollywood knows that a great smile can work wonders for a person's appearance. In fact, studies have shown that teeth are one of the first things a person notices about another person, second only to the eyes.

So it comes as no surprise that with the popularity of makeover shows and self-improvement in general, cosmetic dentistry is enjoying a boon like never before.

Atlanta cosmetic dentist Ronald E. Goldstein, author of "Change Your Smile," estimates that of the almost \$100 billion market in 2006 for dentistry, about \$50 billion is in some way attributed to cosmetics. It's the

most requested service in dentistry today, he said.

"One reason is for the excellent media coverage and increasing awareness of just how important a great smile is to the face and to personal and physical appearance," said Goldstein, who also is a clinical professor with three dental schools.

"When you have the smile you want, you tend to use it more, and you get more out of life both socially and professionally."



WHITENING

The most requested service, both nationally and at Riverview Dental Designs in Tuscaloosa, is tooth whitening, also known as bleaching or tooth lightening.

"It's the greatest value for the least investment for the improvement of the appearance of your teeth. You can whiten all your teeth for

the cost of one crown," said J. Paul Diaz, who practices at Riverview with his partner, Marcus A. Dempsey.

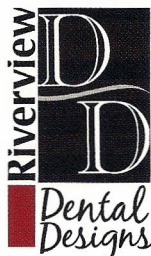
A dentist since 1990, Diaz is a member of the American Society for Dental Aesthetics and a fellow of the Academy of General Dentistry, for which he also served on the board of directors from 1999 to 2000.

Professional tooth whitening can be done at home or in a dentist's office. Unlike the over-the-counter dental products available at the drug store, home-use whiteners are dispensed by dentists and carry the American Dental Association's seal of approval.

With home-use whitening, a dentist makes a custom-fitted tray — think a football mouth guard — that holds a bleaching gel. Patients wear the tray daily or at night for about two weeks, depending on the level of whiteness desired and the dentist's recommendations.

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Paul Diaz and dental hygienist Daphne Elliott place veneers on patient Teresa Manlief's teeth. Images of her teeth before the procedure are displayed on the screen behind them. Veneers are porcelain facings that enhance the cosmetic appearance of the teeth. The procedure takes two appointments to complete, each lasting two to four hours.

In-office, or chairside, bleaching is done only in a dentist's office and normally takes anywhere from 30 minutes to an hour. In this procedure, an oxidizing substance is applied to the teeth, which are then exposed to a special light to accelerate the bleaching agent.

Of the people who opt for home-use whitening, about half experience some degree of sensitivity for the first two to 24 hours after the procedure, Diaz said. For the more advanced, chairside procedure, sensitivity can last two to six weeks.



DENTAL VENEERS

But sometimes, even professional whitening won't do the job. That was the case for Teresa Manlief, whose teeth had a gray cast since she was a child as a result of the use of tetracyclides.

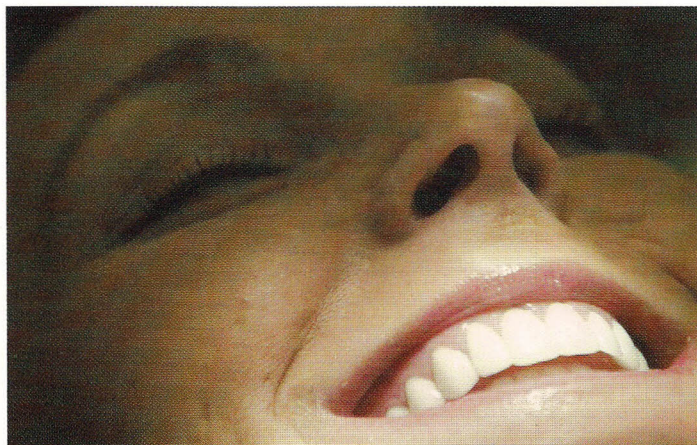
"I tried bleaching and that didn't work, so I just went with the veneers," Manlief said.

More and more patients are discovering the benefits of dental veneers, according to the ADA. Unlike a crown, which covers the entire tooth, a veneer is a thin covering placed over the front of the tooth, the part



Two veneers are left to place on patient Manlief's teeth.

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Teresa Manlief shows off her smile after veneers have been placed on her teeth.

"I get a lot of compliments on my teeth. People notice them more now. I feel good about them."

Teresa Manlief

others see when you smile.

Veneers are a good choice for people whose upper teeth are severely discolored, misshapen, chipped or slightly crooked, the ADA says. They also can be used to conceal uneven spaces or a diastema, which is a large, noticeable gap between the upper front teeth.

Manlief had veneers placed on her upper teeth two years ago and was so pleased with the results that she chose to have her bottom teeth

done.

"I get a lot of compliments on my teeth," she said. "People notice them more now. I feel good about them. [Before] when I was smiling close to somebody, I would catch myself and quit smiling. But I don't do that anymore."

Diaz compares veneers to press-on fingernails. The dentist takes an impression of the patient's teeth and sends it to a laboratory, where it takes about three weeks for the customized veneers to be fabricated.

During the second visit, the dentist places the veneers on the existing tooth or teeth with dental cement. This procedure can take up to four hours to complete. Each veneer can cost anywhere from \$750 to \$900.



BONDING

Similar to veneers, but a less permanent and involved procedure, is bonding. Bonding also is used to improve the look of teeth that are chipped, broken, cracked, stained or those that have spaces between them.

Bonding usually can be done in one appointment. The dentist bonds and sculpts tooth-colored materials made of glass-like substances and resin in a color that matches the other teeth. A special light is used to harden the composite. It is then smoothed and polished to look like a natural tooth.

Diaz said bonding is usually a better option for younger patients, while older patients choose veneers. Bonding also is less uncomfortable a process and, depending on the patient, does not require anesthesia or drilling.

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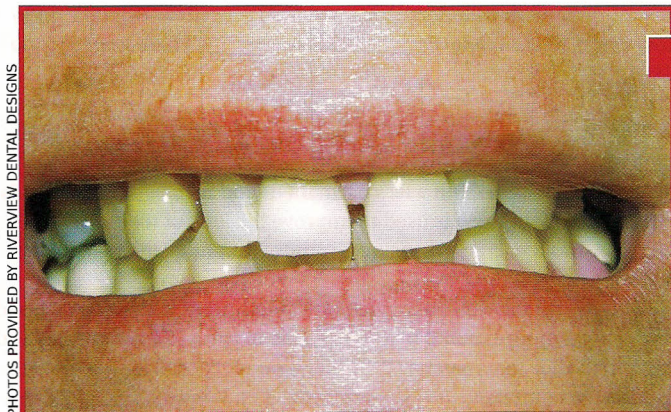
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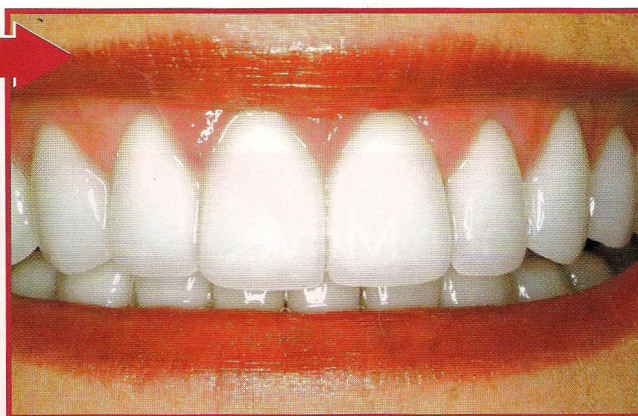
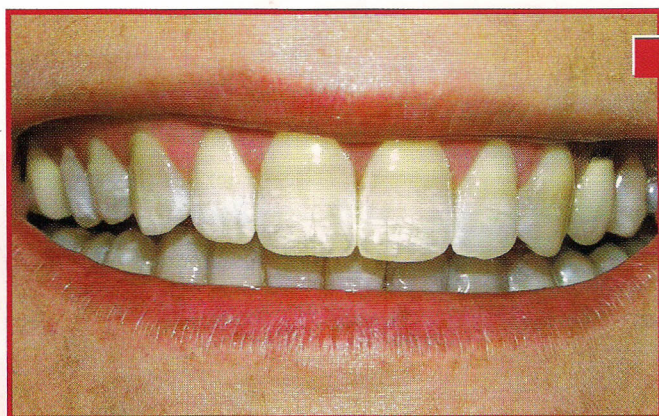


before & after

Take a look at these transformations



These teeth were improved with Da Vinci veneers and crowns to close the spaces and enhance the smile.



The gleam of this mouth was restored with Da Vinci Veneers to correct staining caused by tetracycline. These sets of teeth belong to patients who had their dental work done at Riverview Dental Designs.

Technology advances have made materials used in cosmetic dentistry more durable than ever. With proper maintenance, bonding can last between eight and 10 years, while veneers can last up to 20 years, Diaz said.

Depending on whether the tooth is in the front or back, bonding can cost anywhere from \$130 to \$500 a tooth. It takes about 30 minutes to treat each tooth.



THE FUTURE

While lightening, bonding and veneers are the most common cosmetic dental proce-

dures, others are becoming increasingly popular, Goldstein said.

More adults, he said, are opting to reposition their teeth through orthodontics, especially since the advent of "invisible braces" or Invisalign.

Cosmetic gum surgery and implants for both function and aesthetics are two other procedures that are being done more each year, Goldstein said.

What's next? Goldstein said the industry would see longer-lasting direct bonding materials that are more natural-looking. For example, new zirconia all-ceramic cores have almost eliminated metal-under crowns.

"We never show metal at the gum line and instead use an all ceramic shoulder or junction between tooth and crown for maximum aesthetics," he said.

Perhaps the most exciting new technology now on the market is a cone beam X-ray matching that takes digital CAT scans in 40 seconds as the patient sits upright, Goldstein said.

These amazing 3D radiographs and images are the future and include health benefits, he said.

"The first patient we took the radiographs for, we discovered an occluded carotid artery,"

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"Dentists are there not only to make sure they look good. They're concerned with the overall health."

J. Paul Diaz

Goldstein said. "She was rushed to surgery, and our diagnosis could have been life-saving.

"Dentistry will continue to play such an important role in diagnosis and especially in treatment planning the entire face to help people look their very best."

Diaz said cosmetic dentistry and general dentistry go hand in hand. And as more people choose to visit the dentist for appearances' sake, the more opportunities dentists will have to make sure people are properly caring for their teeth and their overall health.

Medical and dental fields are working closer than ever before, he said. Many times, a dentist can spot an undiagnosed problem when treating periodontal disease or abscesses on gums.

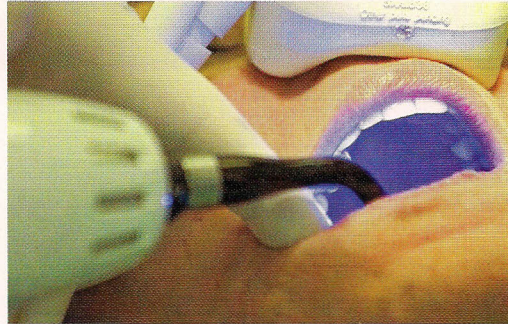
"Dentists are there not only to make sure they look good," he said. "They're concerned with the overall health."



Could your smile use a makeover?

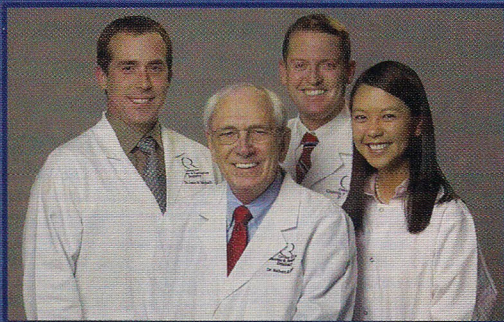
You might want to consider a few tips provided by Ronald E. Goldstein, an Atlanta cosmetic dentist and author, before undergoing a cosmetic dental procedure. "Change Your Smile," in its third printing, is widely considered the most comprehensive consumer guide to cosmetic dentistry.

- Consider doing any cosmetic dentistry before any plastic surgery .
- Get more than one opinion and make sure the dentist you choose can meet both your functional and aesthetic requirements. Dentists have different artistic skills, and it is necessary for patients to match their needs with the dentist's ability to meet those needs. Make sure you are given all your options since there is almost always more than one way to accomplish the result.
- Read "Change Your Smile" (Quintessence) to learn more about the various options to solving your particular problem.



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