

Dental veneers: Everything you need to know

July 20 2024, by Ernie Mundell



Looking for a brand new smile?

Many people with chipped, worn or indelibly stained teeth may ponder the possibility of veneers. They're wholly cosmetic, typically aren't covered by dental insurance and can cost thousands of dollars, so it's best

to understand veneers well before you embark on getting them.

Experts at the Cleveland Clinic define a veneer as a covering "over the front surfaces of your teeth." They're typically made of a tooth-colored [composite material](#) or porcelain, and they are meant to be permanent.

Veneers are different than crowns, because a crown covers the whole of the tooth area. Part of a crown's purpose is to repair a damaged tooth, giving it strength and protection. Veneers are only cosmetic.

Who needs veneers?

According to the experts, veneers are for anyone who wants a more beautiful smile. They can help hide chipped or broken teeth, gaps in tooth spacing, stains that can't be removed, small or misshapen teeth and other imperfections.

Folks with extensive cavities or gum disease may not be good candidates for veneers, the Cleveland Clinic experts said. Health issues like those may need to be rectified before a dentist considers veneers.

What are the different types of veneers?

There are three main types: porcelain, composite and no-prep veneers.

Porcelain veneers

Porcelain restorative veneers are typically custom-made to address individual imperfections. A certain amount of the tooth's original enamel must first be removed, to produce a "roughening" that allows the veneers to take hold.

Composite veneers

These veneers are used to hide "mild" cosmetic issues, the Clinic said. Composite is typically the same kind of tooth-colored compound a dentist would use for dental bonding.

No-prep veneers

These veneers are a less invasive option. They're made to fit your individual smile, but may involve less enamel being removed from the original tooth. However, not everyone is a suitable candidate for no-prep veneers, so ask your dentist.

Removable (pop on) veneers

These veneers pop on and off the original teeth, much like retainers, and help hide imperfections. The downside: They can make eating tougher, and even impede speech.

Getting veneers: Before placement

During your first appointment, your dentist will examine your mouth to see if you're a suitable candidate for veneers. If you are, the next step is for the dentist to remove a small bit of enamel, after which they take a small impression of your teeth.

Often it can take weeks for your new veneers to arrive at your dentist's office from the lab.

Getting veneers: Placement

After double-checking your mouth for the shape, color and fit of your

veneers, your dentist will bond the veneers into place using dental cement.

This is typically an [outpatient procedure](#), with many patients going home the same day.

Post-placement care

The care of veneers is similar to that of your original teeth: brushing, flossing and checking in regularly with your dentist, the Cleveland Clinic says. A brush with soft bristles and a non-abrasive toothpaste are preferred.

Along those lines, avoid crunchy foods like carrots, apples and tough meats, or only chew them using your back [teeth](#).

Veneers can also be stained, so try to avoid substances like berries, red wine, coffee and tea, the Cleveland Clinic experts said.

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Citation: Dental veneers: Everything you need to know (2024, July 20) retrieved 20 July 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2024-07-dental-veneers.html>

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