



# Smile by Design with Porcelain Veneers

**P**orcelain veneers are among the most esthetic means of creating a more pleasing and beautiful smile. Porcelain veneers, within reason, allow for the alteration of tooth position, shape, size, and color. They require a minimal amount of tooth preparation, and therefore, are a more conservative restoration than a crown, which requires significant removal of sound tooth structure. When they are the treatment of choice, they are a truly remarkable restoration and can drastically change a person's smile.

In dentistry, a veneer is a thin, almost "contact lens" thin covering over the tooth's surface, usually the enamel, but sometimes includes the enamel and the deeper dentin layer. It is usually made of porcelain whose properties are close to that of enamel (i.e. high strength, hardness, glassiness, high durability, translucency and high resistance to chemical breakdown). Dental porcelain, in the right artist's hands, can mimic enamel and is the perfect choice to create the desired smile enhancement. This is done through the proper mixing of colored porcelain powders and water in a layering technique where the individual layers are fired in an oven until the finished veneer represents the artist's desired result.

The "laminare veneer" is named for the laminating process required to bond the veneer to the tooth. In dentistry, the laminating of the veneer takes place when the veneer shell is chemically united with the tooth surface using a coupling adhesive. The tooth, adhesive and veneer become one and the resulting union is as strong as the original enamel itself.

Not everyone qualifies for veneer placement. Before a patient undergoes treatment, several items relating to the teeth need to exist:

- The teeth need to be in a more or less normal position
- The gum tissue needs to be healthy
- The patient's bite should be stable upon normal closing

In considering what porcelain veneers can do with closing spaces between teeth, correcting small tooth rotations, shapes and deformities, they are not without limitations. If tooth position is poor, or the angle of the tooth is too out of line, or the bite is way off, veneers are best placed after some minor tooth movement is first accomplished. Patients should be reminded that you can always take away tooth structure, but you can never go backwards and put it back on. Minor orthodontics allows the teeth to be placed in a predetermined position such that no biting interferences are present and less tooth structure is removed during the veneering process. Orthodontic movement can take from four to six months, even up to a year and is well worth the time invested to achieve the result of a balanced smile. The color, or shade, of



the final restoration also needs to be considered before tooth preparation begins. If whitening is desired, no shade should be chosen until two weeks after the whitening process is completed. Teeth "rebound" slightly to a former shade after whitening so it is best to wait until they "settle in" to pick your final shade. Otherwise, you will be constantly whitening your natural teeth to keep the shade even with the veneers.

The second appointment, the insertion or cementation of your laminates, is usually longer in length than the preparation appointment. The temporaries are removed and the teeth are prepared to receive the veneers. A high intensity UV light is used to bond, or cement, your veneers to your teeth. Excess cement is removed, the teeth polished, the bite checked and your new smile is complete. A one-week follow-up visit is usually recommended to evaluate the veneers, remove any possible residual cement, check gum health and answer any questions you may have.

A pleasing smile enhances social confidence, and may be the key to a successful career! **HB**

*For further information, or a complimentary consultation, Dr. Kathleen Collins can be reached at (714) 887-0444. Her office is located at the Huntington Executive Center, 16052 Beach Blvd, Suite 120, Huntington Beach with office hours Mon. – Fri. and on Sat. by appt.*