

VENEERS

What are they?

A veneer is a layer of tooth-coloured material that covers the front of the tooth. They are usually made of porcelain or composite. Composite resin veneers can be built up directly onto the tooth. Porcelain veneers are made in the laboratory and are later glued (bonded) on to the tooth.

Why might I need them?

- When there is a tooth discoloration that cannot be cleaned away
- When there is an uneven shape or texture, including chipping, fractures, pitting or wear of the tooth.
- To aid closure of spaces between the front teeth.
- To create the illusion of straight teeth when the front teeth are slightly crooked.
- To camouflage front teeth that have multiple, shallow and unsightly fillings.

What treatment is involved?

The tooth may need a very small amount of enamel removed from its surface. A mould (impression) will be made of the tooth. The dentist will record the colour that the new veneer will need to be. This information will be sent to a dental laboratory that will make the veneer.

Can anyone have veneers?

Certain factors increase their risk of failure, such as grinding of teeth, excessively worn teeth, very large fillings, unfavourable bite (occlusion), vomiting associated with bulimia and chronic alcoholism and acid regurgitation as in hiatus hernia. They may also be unsuitable if the teeth are very discoloured. Veneers are best avoided in situations where the basic rules of dental hygiene are not observed.

Are there any potential problems?

- Sometimes the edge can become discoloured with time. Veneers can occasionally become unstuck. If they are stuck back on again the rebonding will not be as durable as the initial bond. It may be difficult to match the shade of the veneer.
- Habits such as nail biting or pencil chewing should be avoided.
- Avoid biting into hard food, to prevent fracture of the veneer.
- Use of a soft mouth guard when involved in any form of contact sport is recommended.

What should I do to help?

- Routine oral hygiene procedures such as the use of a soft toothbrush and floss are a must. Electric toothbrushes may be used on veneers.
- If plaque removal from between the teeth is a problem, an interdental brush may be used.
- The use of acidulated fluoride mouth rinses should be avoided as they might damage the surface finish of the veneers.
- Routine follow up visits should be maintained with a dentist.

What if a veneer breaks?

Although fractured veneers can be repaired, they are at best only a patchwork approach. Hence, the cosmetic outcome will be poor. If the fractured piece is preserved, it could be stuck back, or some composite resin material can be used to build up the defect. Although the best answer to the problem is to remake the veneer, the quality of the bond to the tooth achieved the second time around may not be as good as the first time.