

37. WHITEN YOUR TEETH

It used to be that only movie stars and millionaires could afford to have perfect, gleaming teeth. With the advent of new teeth-whitening technologies, the process is more affordable and accessible *and* very natural looking. That means everyone can do something to improve her smile. I happen to think whitening teeth is one of the most important aspects of appearance improvement. That's because discolored or yellow teeth are unattractive and a turn-off to the opposite sex. White teeth also make you look younger. Both discolored teeth and silver fillings age you. Silver amalgam fillings are not used that often nowadays, so if you have them you might be showing your age. To get a handle on how dark your teeth may be, take the white T-shirt test. Hold a brand new white T-shirt up to your teeth and see the difference. If your teeth look considerably darker or more yellow in comparison, it's time to do something about your mouth. See **Tip 38** for advice from **Dr. Elisa Mello of NYC Smile Design** on techniques, from over-the-counter remedies to high-tech treatments that can really make a difference.

38. SMILE STYLE

There are lots of options in teeth whitening and restoration today - from conservative at-home treatments to complex procedures that require visits to a cosmetic dentist. Which one will work for you depends on your budget and the quality and condition of your teeth. Before you invest in expensive cosmetic dentistry, **Dr. Mello recommends that you make sure the dentist specializes in cosmetic procedures - not all dentists are "smile experts."** Here are the most commonly available whitening and restoration products and services, according to Dr. Mello:

At-Home Whitening. In just the last few years there's been an explosion of at-home-teeth-whitening treatments that many people say offer great (and inexpensive) results. Until recently, you could buy only uncomfortable trays and gels over the counter. They were clumsy to use, and forget

about talking on the phone! Now there are strips, paint-on liquids and gels, and overnight products. Since they are the most conservative and the least expensive of all teeth-whitening (about \$25 or less for a four-week treatment), try them first. To really see if they make a difference, do only your top teeth first and compare the final result to your bottom teeth. If you see a big difference, congratulations, move on to the bottom teeth. If not, you may have to see a dentist.

Professional Bleaching. Power bleaching is a high-intensity light treatment that takes about one hour in a dentist's office. Teeth can become up to eight times whiter and brighter with this process. But the whiteness needs to be maintained with at-home trays and gels your dentist will provide. Avoiding cigarettes, coffee, tea, and red wine will also help keep up on those pearly whites. Expect to pay at least \$500 for power bleaching, plus another \$250 to \$500 for the custom maintenance trays and gels. The bad news is that power bleaching helps only if your teeth are stained and discolored from food, beverages, and smoking. Bleaching will not change the color of crowns, caps, or fillings. Certain gray "stripes" in your teeth, usually caused by antibiotics taken when you were a child (most notoriously tetracycline) are part of the actual tooth and not on the surface, and bleaching will not have an effect on such discoloration.

It's Just a Veneer. If you have a lot of crowns, caps, and fillings or if your teeth are discolored from calcification or antibiotics, you may have to consider getting veneers. Ultra-thin porcelain and ceramic veneers will mask chips, discoloration, spaces, and old dental work, giving your teeth a uniform, white appearance that's still natural and very durable. Modern veneers are also translucent, making them appear more like natural teeth, unlike old-fashioned caps that were both bulky and flat looking (which is why movie stars of old used to look like they were wearing a box of Chiclets!). Veneers require serious chair time, however. Expect to make two to three visits. The dentist will take off some enamel off your natural tooth (or remove a thin layer of existing dental work) with a drill and then she will make an impression of your tooth. You'll get a temporary veneer while you wait for

your permanent one. Veneers are an investment: The good news is that you don't have to veneer every single tooth in your mouth—only the ones that show when you smile. **On average Dr. Mello says you can expect to veneer about ten teeth.** And veneers last for fifteen years or longer.

Disappearing Act. A mouth full of metal? At your age? I'm not talking about braces (but I'm getting to that). I am talking about those old silver amalgam fillings you've had since you were in college or before. They're not only unattractive, but they can give away your age, since dentists have moved away from using them over the past several years. But you can do something about it, and it is called filling restoration. Tooth-colored porcelain and composite-resin material currently used for new fillings can also be used to replace old silver fillings. Your dentist will numb the area, remove the old filling, and clean away any existing decay. Then he'll line the cavity with a resin or cement filler. **According to Dr. Mello, the dentist takes an impression. While you are waiting for your new filling you will get a temporary one, also tooth-colored.** These new materials are sturdier than silver amalgam. Another benefit? They actually strengthen your teeth and will last years.

Brace Yourself. If you missed out on braces when you were a kid, and your crooked teeth are driving you nuts, fear not. Today you can straighten your teeth without embarrassing braces. A removable appliance called Invisalign is made from transparent plastic that fixes your smile while keeping your natural tooth structure intact. It's similar to a retainer, so it is not noticeable when you are wearing it. You can remove the appliance to brush your teeth, so food and plaque will not get trapped like they can with metal braces. A computer will make a three-dimensional image from impressions of your teeth to map out the incremental movements necessary to straighten out your smile. A series of aligners is then manufactured. Your dentist will monitor your progress with office visits every six weeks. You wear each set for two weeks until the six weeks is up and then you start all over again until the process is

complete. That can take as long as regular braces—from several months to several years, depending on how many aligners you need to achieve the desired results. Invisalign can also cost as much as regular braces, too from \$5,000 to \$9,000.

Lingual braces, traditional metal and plastic braces that are applied behind your teeth, are yet another teeth-straightening option.

Talk to your doctor about other strides in cosmetic dentistry, which include laser treatments that remove excess gum tissue to give your teeth a more proportioned look; gum grafting to improve the appearance of lost gum tissue; and new dental implants for missing teeth.

39. FACE IT!

Men love beautiful skin. It's a wonderful calling card, so take care of it. In **Tip 57** (page 61) I'll talk about the advantages of seeking out medical attention for your skin. But you can and should maintain a healthy at home skin regimen. Never skimp on your skin care! Our skin takes a beating day in and day out—and in all four seasons. It's one of the first parts of the body to show age. On the other hand, soft, supple, fresh, and clear skin is youthful, sexy, beautiful, and healthy. Men love soft skin. You will be amazed at the many new, effective products on the market that you can add to your daily routine.

40. THE SKINNY ON INGREDIENTS

Over-the-counter skin products make all sorts of claims. You can avoid making costly mistakes by knowing how to read a label to find exactly what you need to help make your skin kissable. But is there really such a thing as a "miracle in a bottle?" Unfortunately not, but there are ingredients that can make a difference in the way your skin looks. Here's a guide to ingredients and what they do, from New York dermatologist Dr. Howard Sobel, whom *many* Manhattanites trust with their faces. Be sure to check with your own doctor before changing your skin care regi-

Finally, you can write me and share your success stories or inquire about the services of Janis Spindel Serious Matchmaking, Inc. by e-mailing me at Janisbook@janisspindelmatchmaker.com I look forward to hearing from you!

Janis's "Best of" Resource Guide

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