

Blinded by the **White!**

By David M. Kaffey, DDS

Part 1

You have seen the extreme makeover shows and marveled at how these average and sometimes unattractive people have been transformed into stunningly beautiful individuals. Those shows have inspired you to pursue and adopt a healthier lifestyle, eat fewer carbs, exercise more, and look for ways to make you look and feel better. Yoga, kickboxing, Pilates, and botox are all great ways to get you looking good and feeling good about yourself. Odds are you've even tried to improve your smile as part of your "makeover," no need to be embarrassed about that. The American Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry says 99.7% of Americans believe a nice smile is an important social asset and three-quarters of adults feel an unattractive smile can hurt a person's chances for career success. We all want to be Blinded by the White!

Cosmetic dentistry is a crucial part of any "makeover." Improving your smile can be one of the most important ways to improve your appearance, self-confidence, and self-esteem. A great smile not only looks fabulous but also makes you feel fabulous. There have been many studies showing that people with a beautiful smile are perceived to be "intelligent, wealthy, successful in their career, popular with the opposite sex, happy, and sensitive to other people." We all want to be Blinded by the White!

Ok. So you want a great smile to show the world who you really are. Now what? As a cosmetic dentist who trained under some of the world's most famous and recognized dentists in the world at the Las Vegas Institute (LVI), a member of the American Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry (AACD), and been featured on the NBC 10! Show, I hope to give you what you need to know before you decide if cosmetic dentistry is right for you.

Let's begin with the basics. There are several important things to consider and look for before you decide to go get the smile of your dreams.

What Do You Want to Change?

First, think about what it is about your smile you would like improved. Look at your smile and pictures of people with beautiful smiles. What makes their smile different from yours? Do you see any dark mercury fillings showing in your mouth? Are your teeth straight, white, and clean? Remember, don't just focus



on your teeth, look at your gums. Are they red and puffy? Do they bleed when you floss? Do they "frame" your teeth well? There are minor, painless laser procedures available to correct gum shape problems.

Now look at your bite and lips. Do your teeth come together evenly? Are any of the top teeth behind or inside your bottom teeth when you bite? Do you have chips and gaps? Are they yellow, gray, discolored or rotated? An attractive smile will not have any of these problems.

Let's move your lips. Are they even and symmetrical? Do they "frame" your teeth and gums well? Would you want to kiss them? By giving your teeth, gums, bite, and lips a little thought, your cosmetic dentist would be better able to guide you and offer procedures that will help you get the smile you want.

Choosing a Cosmetic Dentist

Now that you know what you want changed, it's time to start looking for the right person to give you the smile of your dreams. In order to make sure your dentist is skilled in cosmetic dentistry, the AACD recommends that you discuss the following with a dentist before undergoing treatment:



Before and After Photos - Examine the dentist's treatment results to see what type of procedures they do and what their results look like. This will give you an idea of what you can expect for your smile.

References - Read what other patients have to say about this dentist and the dental work they perform. Most cosmetic dentists will have testimonials from patients who have undergone the improvements you are considering.

Continuing Education - Be certain that your dentist has taken many continuing education courses to keep him or her up-to-date with the latest techniques in clinical cosmetic dentistry. Cosmetic dentistry is one of the most complex and fastest evolving areas of dentistry. It is essential that your dentist's training and education be on the cutting edge.

Many dentists, if not all, who perform many cosmetic dentistry procedures will offer initial consultations so that both you and the dentist can get acquainted. This initial consult will allow you to learn about the office's philosophy of care, find out about the dentist's qualifications (if you haven't already), and ask questions to discover what procedures might be right for you. Some more advanced cosmetic dentists may also have Cosmetic Imaging Software available. Once a few photographs of your face and teeth are taken, the dentist can show you what you can look like with that beautiful new smile, before any dental work is even started!

Obtaining this information will help you know what you want and who you want to do it for you. The next question is how will the cosmetic dentist Blind You by the White? Stay tuned because in the next issue of PhillyFit, I'll reveal the secrets of how we create that 5 Star Hollywood smile you want.



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