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Choosing the right dentist

Today more than ever, the choice of a cosmetic dentist is a critical decision that should be made with the utmost care. So how do you choose a cosmetic dentist? After all, in today's marketplace, many general dentists perform at least some types of cosmetic dental procedures. Over the past few years, there has been a dramatic influx of "cosmetic dentists" into the field so much so that in the industry, being a "cosmetic dentist" is almost a cliché . . . passé'. Why? Because these days, any general dentist who does things as simple as whitening teeth can claim to be a cosmetic dentist. So when someone is looking to get a Hollywood smile, what should they expect? Are all dentists the same?

Choosing the right cosmetic dentist for you, one with substantial experience in complex cases, extensive hands-on training, and a gentle approach that compliments your needs and wants is critical to achieving the most successful outcome - your gorgeous new smile. Educated and discerning people will realize that most "cosmetic dentistry," if done properly, is a complex and precise set of operative procedures that will dramatically affect their lives for years to come.

Selecting a cosmetic dentist can be a difficult and confusing process. In the end, it is a personal decision that each person must make for himself or herself. We can, however, offer some advice, which our clients have found helpful during the selection process. The most important of these tips include the following:

1. Take Your Time

Most cosmetic dental procedures are elective procedures, not emergencies. Time spent learning about the dental procedures, different techniques and materials, and cosmetic dentists you are considering will pay great dividends in terms of your understanding and emotional comfort later. If in doubt, see a couple different cosmetic dentists for a consultation. This will clarify in your own mind those personal characteristics that you would like your cosmetic dentists to have. Our office is happy to provide second opinions.

2. Post Graduate Cosmetic Dental Training

To perform cosmetic dental procedures at the highest level; technical skill, an artistic eye, and a rigorous program of post-graduate training in cosmetic dentistry is needed. It may surprise you to learn that the vast majority of dental schools don't teach any courses in cosmetic dentistry. For the few that do, they are usually limited to only a few introductory courses. Your mouth is not the place for on-the-job training. Therefore, it is crucial that the cosmetic dentist that you select continually completes series of hands-on courses in cosmetic dentistry. The field changes rapidly and keep abreast of what was state-of-the-art five or ten years ago is not anymore. In depth training is essential to learn the latest techniques and materials to get optimal results. The significance lies not only in developing the dentist's clinical judgment and technical skill, but also in demonstrating his/her commitment to practicing cosmetic dentistry at the highest level of excellence.

3. Professional Cosmetic Dentistry Credentials

In dentistry as in medicine, specialties exist that indicate a higher level of education, knowledge, and expertise in particular areas of focus. Presently, however, there is not an **American Dental Association (ADA)** recognized specialty in cosmetic dentistry. There are however a few rigorous programs, which requires dentists to attend a number of continuing education courses in cosmetic dentistry, be tested, and submit a number of cosmetic cases to be judged by a panel of cosmetic dentistry experts.

4. Integrity

Find a cosmetic dentist who is honest in his/her assessment of your needs and of their ability to meet your expectations. Be wary of the doctor minimizing your recovery period and telling you just how "easy and simple" everything is going to be.

5. A Caring Approach & Great Communication

Find a doctor with a good chair side manner who conveys to you that they care about you as a person as well as a client. Cosmetic dentistry is a process not a single operation. Find someone with whom you can talk easily. It is just as important that he/she understands what you desire as that you understand what they are describing. To accomplish these goals, the first thing the cosmetic dentist should do is listen and make sure he or she understands all your concerns, needs and desires as they relate to your dental health and the look of your smile. Only then should they spend time diagnosing and consulting on the recommended treatment plan, which should be individualized for each client.

6. A Sense of Perfectionism

Find a cosmetic dentist who is accurate in his/her evaluation of your needs, precise in the execution of their operative plan, and meticulous in their craftsmanship. Although perfection is in the eye of the beholder, this doctor will do whatever it takes without cutting corners, not only to satisfy you, but also to meet their own personal standards of excellence. Make sure the cosmetic dentist addresses not just the teeth but also gums, lips, facial structure and your specific requests.

7. An Artistic Eye

While technical virtuosity is necessary to produce a great clinical result, it is not sufficient. Excellent cosmetic dentistry demands a highly sophisticated artistic sense. In order to achieve an optimal aesthetic result, one must have a clear vision of what is artistically possible and appropriate. In this regard, it helps greatly if the cosmetic dentist works closely with the master ceramist, talking with them about the desired aesthetic results.

8. Extensive Smile Design Experience

Before you randomly select a dentist out of the phone book or rely on your long-time family dentist to give you the smile design of your dreams, think again. Great cosmetic dentistry is an art. The fact is, many dentists are generalists who simply have not performed cosmetic smile designs very many times or with a regularity that leads to mastery of this art. So, if you are considering veneers, for example, you should ask exactly how many veneers the dentist has placed. Our doctors have placed not just a few or even a few hundred like many dentists, but rather have placed a thousand veneers or more. Placing this number of veneers allows our dentists to see a wide variety of many different types of smiles and bring this experience and expertise to enhance your case.

9. Make Sure You Review Before and After Photos of Work Actually Performed by the Cosmetic Dentist

You'll want to look at before and after photos of cosmetic dentistry that has actually been performed by the dentist that you are considering. Beware that there are commercially available photos and albums that show the possibilities for cosmetic dentistry. But you want to confirm that you are seeing actual work of the dentist you are considering and make sure that the before photos you look at are also cases similar to yours.

10. Other Things You May Want to Consider

References from other patients, a tour of the office including sterilization areas, and asking about technology and materials used in the practice are all things you may want to look into.

A few words of wisdom

Before making life-altering changes to your smile, you should realize that just like all doctors, restaurants or cars are not created equal – neither are dental practices. That's why real, specific credentials in cosmetic dentistry and years of experience in the field have made one practice the smart choice of patients from Vernon Hills and the surrounding communities – from business people to soccer moms.

Your mouth is not the place for on-the-job training. It may surprise you to learn that the vast majority of dental schools don't teach any courses in cosmetic dentistry. For the few that do, they are usually limited to only a few introductory courses. And, the field

changes rapidly. What was current five or ten years ago is simply not anymore.

What are the "right" credentials? You wouldn't ask your family physician or a specialist in another area to perform a nose job for you, so does it make sense to let your family dentist, periodontist or orthodontist perform your smile enhancement? The fact is, to achieve great results for your smile makeover, insist on the credentials specifically in cosmetic dentistry (as opposed to all sorts of other areas) and doctors with extensive training in that discipline. Instead of performing a wide spectrum of all sorts of other dental procedures and dabbling in cosmetic dentistry occasionally, ours is a practice where beautiful smile enhancements are performed routinely.