

Composite Veneers or Porcelain Veneers? Information and Informed Consent

Cosmetic dentistry procedures can improve the smile. This really depends on what one wishes to improve, time and budget. Two very popular cosmetic dentistry treatments are porcelain veneers and composite veneers. In this article we discuss these treatments that can dramatically improve your smile.

What is a Porcelain Veneer?

A porcelain veneer is a porcelain laminate custom made to bond to the front surface of a tooth. Porcelain veneers are sometimes compared to false nails as they are very thin cosmetic coverings.

When Do I Need a Porcelain Veneer?

- Chipped teeth – can be fixed with Porcelain veneers
- Discoloured teeth – can be made brighter with Porcelain veneers
- Misshapen teeth – porcelain veneers can improve the shape of your teeth and hide 'ugly' teeth
- Crowded teeth – If teeth are out of line or too close together, porcelain veneers are an alternative to orthodontics or braces.
- Gappy teeth – porcelain veneers are great at closing gaps between teeth. Teeth proportions can be made perfect.

Advantages of Porcelain Veneers

Porcelain veneers require minimal tooth preparation; hence you conserve as much tooth as possible. Porcelain veneers look very natural and should be much better than what was there before.

Disadvantages of Porcelain Veneers

Tooth preparation is normally required; if teeth are really malpositioned then more preparation may be needed. This is quite destructive for the tooth and is irreversible. There is also a small risk of the tooth devitalising and eventually needing root canal treatment.

How Are Teeth Prepared For Porcelain Veneers?

Normally between 0.5mm – 1 mm of tooth is adjusted to give room for the porcelain veneer to fit to the tooth surface without looking bulky.

Tooth preparation depends on how the teeth are originally positioned. Sometimes teeth need no preparation and at other times more to correctly shape the teeth. After the preparation a mould is taken and temporary veneer/s are made. You then return approximately 2 weeks later to have the porcelain veneers bonded to your tooth / teeth. Porcelain veneers usually take two visits to complete.

Temporary Veneers

Temporary veneers are made from resin, they are essential to do accurately as this will give you a good idea of shape / colour of the final porcelain veneers. This gives you time to get used to your new teeth.

Cost of Porcelain Veneers

The cost of porcelain veneers varies, so it is important to discuss this with the cosmetic dentist before starting treatment.

How long do Porcelain Veneers Last?

Porcelain veneers can last you many years. This depends on your hygiene, diet and the health of your existing teeth. Also whether you clench or grind your teeth.

Alternatives to Porcelain Veneers

Cosmetic resin bonded veneers can sometimes be done, but are slightly weaker than porcelain veneers. Porcelain crowns can also be used but tend to be reserved for badly broken teeth as they cover all surfaces of the tooth.

What is a Composite Veneer?

A composite veneer is made of a composite resin filling material. It is placed over the entire front surface of the tooth to improve its aesthetic appearance

When Do I need a composite Veneer?

Similar to porcelain veneers, composite veneers can be used at improving many dental problems:

- Chipped teeth – can be fixed with composite veneers
- Misshapen teeth – composite veneers can improve the shape of your teeth and hide 'ugly' teeth
- Crowded teeth – If teeth are out of line or too close together, composite veneers are an alternative to orthodontics or braces.
- Gappy teeth – composite veneers are great at closing gaps between teeth. Teeth proportions can be made perfect.

Advantages of Composite Veneers

Composite veneers require either no or minimal tooth preparation, hence you conserve as much tooth as possible. They are also a cheaper alternative to porcelain veneers and completely reversible if no preparation is needed.

Only one appointment is needed if you decide to go ahead with composite veneers.

Disadvantages of Composite Veneers

Due to the composite resin material, composite veneers can stain over time especially if your diet consists of curry, red wine etc.

Composite veneers do not last as long as porcelain veneers and wear and tear is likely to occur.

How long will composite veneers last?

This depends on many factors; the type of composite material used (there is a big difference in the quality of different composite materials); the aftercare and habits (i.e. if you continued to drink a lot of fizzy drinks and grind your teeth then this would reduce their longevity). On average, Composite veneers can last between 2 – 5 years.