

Options to enhance your smile

There are many people who ask about options to enhance their smile. The first step to coming up with an answer is to schedule an exam and cleaning with your dentist. Regular dental exams or checkups are the best way to make sure your gums and teeth stay healthy. Dental exams and cleanings should be done every 6 months to allow your dentist to diagnose any problems which may be developing in the early stages and allow preventive action to be taken before the problems become more severe. Options to enhance your smile will depend on the findings from your dental exam.

If you have been diagnosed with decay it is important to have the decay or cavities treated. Teeth with decay are often dark in color and can be noticeable in an unfavorable way. Dental caries initially involves only the enamel and produces no symptoms. Symptoms produced by dental caries usually appears late in the process. As the caries reaches the dentin it causes pain, at first when hot, cold, or sweet foods contact the tooth. As the caries grows and become larger it can affect the nerve, requiring a root canal or cause a tooth fracture, which may require extraction. When caries becomes visible they are often visible as small holes or pits or discoloration on the tooth surface. Treating your decay or cavities will prevent more extensive treatment in the future and ensure that you do not have pain. Treating your cavities with tooth colored filling materials or composites helps to prevent discoloration and blends in nicely with the existing teeth which can brighten you smile while at the same time keep your teeth healthy.

If you have missing teeth the gaps from the spaces of missing teeth can be very noticeable and make an unfavorable impression. Once a tooth is missing it is imperative to replace the tooth and close the gap. When a tooth is missing teeth next to the space and below the space can drift into the space. This can cause teeth to become misaligned and cause the occlusion or bite to become problematic or “crooked”. Spaces created by the drifting teeth can open more gaps between other teeth. How missing teeth are replaced depends on the diagnosis, treatment plan, and discussion between you and your dentist following a complete exam. Missing teeth can be replaced with several options. Replacement options include dental implants, fixed bridges, partial dentures, and full dentures. Any of these options can enhance your smile.

Crooked or misaligned teeth can cause you to be self-conscious about your smile. Malocclusion can be corrected in a number of ways. Orthodontic treatment often is more comfortable and takes less time than it did years ago. Braces have brackets that are smaller making them less noticeable. Brackets are made of metal, ceramic, plastic. Furthermore teeth can be realigned by applying continuous mild force through the use of a removable appliance made of clear plastic which the patient can take out of his or her mouth for eating and general oral hygiene. These are the least noticeable and most comfortable.

The least invasive and least costly way to improve you smile after caries have been treated is to have your teeth whitened. Even if you teeth are crowded or misaligned whitening your teeth can make your smile look fresh and pleasant. Bleaching can safely lighten the color of teeth. The most effective and safest way to bleach your teeth is through your dentist. A take home bleaching kit provided by your dentist with custom made bleaching trays is effective and gives you control over the actual whitening process. By choosing a take home product dispensed by a dentist you can control how often you bleach and for how long you continue bleaching so that you can achieve the desired brightness that you desire. It also gives you the ability to maintain the level of whiteness you achieve through periodic applications of the bleaching agent which is available as refill syringes utilizing the custom tray.

Remember that timely treatment can reduce the need for more expensive and time consuming treatments. Regular checkups and cleanings every 6 months with your dentist can help to keep your teeth healthy and trouble free. At your next visit talk to your dentist about how you can enhance your smile.

Written by Carlos Vallecillo, DDS and Rossana Menna, DDS

www.monalisadental.com