

Talking with Patients

Porcelain Veneers

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WHAT IS IT?

Porcelain veneers are ceramic facings that primarily are bonded to the front surfaces of anterior teeth. The average thickness of a porcelain veneer is usually less than 0.75 mm. Typically, the teeth receiving porcelain veneers must first be lightly ground or prepared to make room for the veneers. For best results, these preparations must be kept in the enamel part of the tooth for optimal bonding and strength. Since the preparations are usually restricted to the enamel and are not deep into the tooth, temporary restoration of the prepared teeth is often not necessary. After the teeth are prepared, the dentist makes an impression that is sent to a dental laboratory.

A dental laboratory fabricates the veneers on a stone model made from the impression. On a subsequent appointment, the finished veneers are tried in the mouth to assess the color, form, and fit. Then each veneer is bonded to the prepared tooth with a tooth-colored composite resin cement. Once bonded to the enamel surfaces of the tooth, the porcelain veneer is very strong, although patients are still advised to avoid biting hard foods or objects, to prevent chipping.

WHEN IS IT NEEDED?

Porcelain veneers are primarily indicated for dark, malformed, or otherwise esthetically compromised anterior teeth. Teeth that are crowded should not be treated with porcelain veneers, but rather malaligned teeth primarily should be treated with orthodontics. Teeth with large restorations also may not be suitable for porcelain veneers and may need to be treated with crowns instead.

Alternative treatments for teeth that might be treated with porcelain veneers include tooth whitening (for yellow or mildly discolored teeth), direct bonding with composite resins (for slightly spaced teeth and minor esthetic corrections), and full coverage with crowns (for extensively restored teeth, more complex esthetic modifications, and occasionally root canal-treated teeth).



Before

ADVANTAGES

- conservative (compared with crowns)
- durable
- highly esthetic

DISADVANTAGES

- requires some tooth removal (but not as much as for a crown)
- sensitive technique
- moderately expensive

CONCLUSIONS

Porcelain veneers represent an excellent treatment alternative for esthetically compromised teeth and can provide many years of service when properly planned and placed.

The following pictures illustrate a clinical case in which several front teeth were treated with porcelain veneers for esthetic improvement of shade and contour.



After