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London
City Dental

Your teeth don't have to show your age!

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We can't stop ageing – but we can make the best of what we already have. Looking after your skin and general appearance is one step. But what about your teeth? They are a revealing sign of ageing – yet surprising things can be done today to reverse this process.



Before



After

Staying young-looking

Teeth are one of the first features that people look at. Our teeth deteriorate over the years, gradually taking on more and more imperfections that betray our age – or make us look even older than we really are. In Western society, where one in six people will soon be over 65, everybody wants to stay as young-looking as possible.

So how can a 50-year old stay young-looking? Well, maybe she has fortunate genes, looks after her skin regularly (often in addition to great genes) and has had excellent cosmetic facial surgery. To look at her, you wouldn't be able to guess her true age – until she starts smiling. Then her mouth gives the game away. How? Because of the state of her teeth.

Signs of ageing – your teeth

How do your teeth betray your age?

Their colour changes over time, losing brightness and luminosity, and becoming darker. Dental wear will shorten teeth, making them look 'stubby'. Years of food, nicotine and fluid stains can also stain teeth permanently.

Tooth shape

The natural smile line is a gentle convex. But extensive wear on our front teeth can change this to a straight or even concave line (reversed curve). Tooth grinding, prompted by stress, accelerates this dental erosion. Chipped tooth edges are another sign, creating an unbalanced and disharmonious look.

Tooth surface

The fine ridges on young teeth get smoothed away as we get older. While in early adulthood such smoothing can produce attractive teeth that reflect light more uniformly, too much smoothing will show age.

Tooth crack lines

Over time, micro-fractures can appear on the enamel surface. While perhaps superficial, they can show up as little crack lines, which will downgrade the attractiveness of teeth.

Filled front teeth

White fillings in front teeth need to be regularly replaced or they change colour and start to look obvious. They may even show dark lines between the edge of the filling and the natural tooth.

Smile colour

White reflects light and dark absorbs it. A mouth with silver-mercury (amalgam) fillings in many of the teeth will present an overall dull grey colour that absorbs light and therefore looks dark. It's another sign of ageing.

● Signs of ageing – your lips

Over time the lips lose muscle tone and become thinner and narrower. The top lip can sag, covering more of the upper teeth. The lower lip may also drop, showing more of the lower teeth.

If you had fairly thin lips when young then they will become even more so. Also thin vertical lines appear in the lips, which are accentuated and hastened by smoking. Crease lines can also appear at the corners of the lips, often with a more significant, deeper crease line, angled downward, which can make you look permanently unhappy.

● What can you do to restore youthful looks?

Your smile is the key to your facial appearance. So you need to do something about any old, worn, chipped and discoloured teeth you have and remove these obvious clues to ageing. The essence in good cosmetic/aesthetic dentistry is to combine modern techniques with artistic flair – so that nobody can guess what's been done.

● Ways of improving your teeth

Re-contouring

A little bleaching whitens the teeth and slight reshaping restores the edges of the teeth to what they were in youth.

Replacing fillings

Using modern materials for the front and most prominent teeth can cause the dental restoration work to blend in with the general colour of the tooth.

Bonding

A synthetic material that looks like natural tooth enamel is bonded to the enamel tooth surface. Because it can be shaped and polished, this material can alter the color, texture, size, shape and even, to an extent, the position of the teeth. The treatment can be applied to the eight to twelve upper front teeth. It lasts from three to six years.

Veneering

This is a technique similar to bonding – only more permanent. A thin, hard porcelain veneer is individually made for each tooth to the correct colour, size and shape. Porcelain is as durable as the original tooth enamel so the restored tooth will last for decades rather than years. Veneering is often done on front incisor teeth that have been damaged.

● Improving your lips

Thin lips can be treated by using fillers to accentuate the lip line (vermillion border) between the red part of the lips and the normal skin. These fillers are, for example, bovine collagen, or natural hyaluronic acid (Restylane). The effect lasts up to twelve months. The substance of the lip can also be increased by injecting Restylane or even fat from another part of the body into the lip itself. The result, of course, depends on how much and where it is placed.

● So how can your smile make you look younger?

Look in the mirror for a few minutes. Decide what parts of your face, and particularly your smile, you would like to rejuvenate using the techniques mentioned above. Then consult with a cosmetic dental surgeon, who can show you an accurate simulation of how treatment would look on your face. It is advisable to do this before going ahead with any cosmetic surgery on your face.

Most cosmetic medical surgeons are still not orientated or even knowledgeable enough about what cosmetic dentists are able to achieve with teeth. A few short dental treatments can take years off your looks, helping you evaluate whether other surgery is necessary.

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