

Technology Speeds Up New Smiles

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NEW YORK—How many years have we spent straightening our teeth, jamming them into trays of whitening gel, or just agonizing over the way our teeth look?

The journey to a better-looking smile is being sped up as computer-aided design and computer-aided manufacturing (CAD/CAM) become more prevalent. These technologies, which let dentists scan a three-dimensional image of a patient's teeth, allow for some cosmetic procedures to be completed in one visit.

Though some procedures still take time—straightening teeth being the primary one—leveraging high-tech imaging technology allows CAD/CAM dentists to quickly and accurately produce crowns and veneers that instantly enhance the function and look of patients' teeth.

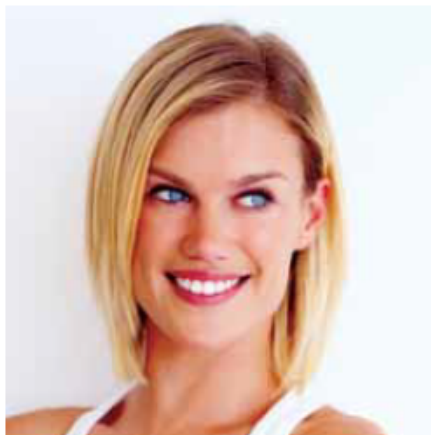
Crowns and Veneers

Manhattan's Gallery 57 Dental is unlike the majority of other CAD/CAM dental offices in that they have their own in-house lab, which eliminates many problems associated with anterior veneers.

Dr. Lee Wexler, one of the founders of Gallery 57 Dental, explained: "Two major concerns are color match and correct shape/contour of the veneers. Another concern is temporaries falling off while waiting for the veneers to be made."

Wexler says the ceramist in his practice is

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always present to correctly match the shade and contour of the veneers with the patient for a "live," real-time view. "Since we make the veneers the same visit, there are no temporaries," he said.

Realistic Results

The top concern among cosmetic dentistry patients—and the hardest thing for conventional dentists to achieve—is getting the right look. So, patients should be sure to convey to their dentist what they are looking for.

"For many patients, the right look is natural but younger," wrote Koenigsberg. "Many patients have seen friends, co-workers, etcetera with veneers that were artificial-looking, and that is their major concern. Of course, some patients want a Hollywood look that is very white, and it is important to communicate with the patient, find out their expecta-

tions, and meet those expectations."

Here again, going with a dentistry practice with an in-house lab helps. Because there's no need to mail out an order to an outside lab, matching color and shape doesn't involve any guesswork, or ugly surprises weeks down the road.

Straightening teeth can take anywhere from 6 weeks to 18 months depending on how much movement is necessary, according to Dr. Andrew Koenigsberg, a co-founder of Gallery 57 Dental. Minor crookedness can be corrected by one-visit veneers.

Any desired whitening can usually be done concurrently with Invisalign.

"Whitening can also be done in a single visit in the office, though many patients like to whiten at home with custom trays (about a two-week process), since it is about half the cost, and there is no sitting around in the dental office," wrote Koenigsberg in an email.

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Ceramist Alwyn Naraine adds the finishing touches to a crown to make sure its colors are as natural as possible.