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TOOTH FAIRIES



Surprisingly, many people with crooked teeth have already tried to straighten them. “We see a lot of patients who wore braces as teenagers and stopped wearing a retainer,” says Dr. Jennifer Jablow, a dentist based in New York. Because the body has memory, people in their late 20s to 40s are noticing that their teeth are crowding and things are shifting, she explains. To address this, Invisalign created the Vivera retainer, designed to be worn at night indefinitely.

But, like Madonna, who has famously refused to close the gap between her front teeth, not everyone wants a Hollywood-perfect smile. In fact, many of Jablow’s clients prefer to keep tiny flaws, like a slightly rotated or crooked tooth or even a tiny chip. These “perfect imperfections,” as Jablow calls them, ensure that their smile doesn’t look fake (à la Jessica Simpson) and their teeth look like their own.

PORCELAIN DOLL Despite some cautionary tales (before Hilary Duff had her teeth redone, they earned her the nickname “Horsey Hil”), veneers and crowns can look as natural as your own 32. Made with porcelain or tooth-coloured composites, a veneer is bonded to the front or the edge of a tooth, whereas a crown is thicker and covers the tooth 360 degrees. To ensure that veneers look authentic, dentists take skin tone into consideration, creating them in custom-blended shades.

“It’s best to consider veneers and crowns when you want to change colour, shape or size,” says Dr. Jeffrey Norden, a dentist and owner of WestcoastSmile Dental Studio and Whitening Spa in Vancouver. “We can use veneers to alter these dimensions when the tooth itself is

structurally sound.” Crowns are used if the tooth has been compromised by cavities or extreme dental work. Veneers are also an option if you’ve tried whitening with disappointing results. Jablow explains that extrinsic stains (caused by food and drink) respond well to bleaching, but intrinsic stains (caused by antibiotics or excessive fluoride) often do not.

Some dentists offer Lumineers, an alternative to veneers. Unlike traditional veneers, which require some preparation (the tooth has to be cut), Lumineers don’t, which means less chair time and pain. However, dentists like Jablow aren’t fans. “I like traditional veneers better,” she says. “You get more aesthetically pleasing results, and they’re stronger and healthier for gum tissue.”

But a pretty porcelain smile comes with a price tag. Veneers and crowns can be as much as \$1,000 or more per tooth, but they aren’t a quick fix. “A well-done veneer or crown should last eight to 10 years or more if the patient follows proper home care and visits the dentist,” says Norden. Another bonus? No need to sip Chardonnay instead of Merlot—ceramic is stain-proof.

With the cost and commitment, Jablow suggests finding a dentist who specializes in porcelain restorations. “If you’re going to get a nose job, you want to go to someone who does noses all the time, not breast enhancements,” she says, adding that it’s also wise to talk with other patients and see before-and-after pictures. □

FRESH AIR

Bad breath can stifle your smile—and your social life. Stress, skipping meals and poor digestion could be to blame, says Anne Bosy, founder and chief scientist for OraFresh Enterprises, a chain of fresh-breath clinics in Alberta and Ontario. So, how can you tell if your breath isn’t fresh? For serious cases, dentists use an electronic device to determine if gases produced by the bacteria that cause bad breath are present.

Brushing and flossing regularly and using a tongue cleaner will help keep bad breath at bay, says Bosy, but they won’t work for everyone. If you have chronic halitosis, it has to be treated with antibiotics, she says.

Matthew Gowan, an associate professor of botanical medicine at the Canadian College of Naturopathic Medicine, says naturopathic doctors can also treat bad breath with natural remedies that stimulate digestion, such as peppermint, fennel and ginger.