



## **CARE OF VENEERS – PORCELAIN OR COMPOSITE RESIN**

A veneer is a thin 'shell' of material that is placed over your natural tooth to correct the size, colour, shape or appearance in some way.

These are often made for cosmetic reasons and usually on anterior, or front teeth, because they greatly improve the appearance of the smile.

There are two completely different materials that veneers are made of, Porcelain or Composite. Below there is an explanation of how they are made and the advantages and disadvantages of each.

### **Direct Composite Resin Veneers**

Direct composite veneers are those that are directly formed in the mouth (ie. They are not sent to a laboratory). The material is a soft, putty-like consistency which is placed onto a tooth which has been primed and bonded. The putty is shaped to look like the front of the tooth and forms a thin coating, approximately the thickness of a fingernail, over the front of the tooth. This changes the colour, shape or texture of the tooth underneath. It is then light cured so it hardens to a rock-like consistency.

#### **ADVANTAGES**

The main advantage of Direct Composite Resin Veneers is the fact that they are less expensive as there is no laboratory involved, and they can be completed in one visit.

#### **DISAVANTAGES**

Direct composite does not usually polish to the same degree as porcelain and are not as strong and therefore can break more easily than porcelain. If they do break, it is because the stress that has been exerted on them exceeds the strength of the material. It is not because the dentist has done a poor job.

Composite resin is susceptible to staining around the edges or 'margins'. This is because when they are made, the dentist needs to feather off at the edges next to the gum and in between the teeth and these edges gradually lose bond strength to the tooth and start 'leaking'. There are also limits to how far the dentist can polish back and it is impossible to get into the gaps between the teeth with the polishing apparatus. The dentist cannot get a high polish on the resin in between the teeth if it has been cut back for contouring purposes.

### **Indirect Porcelain Veneers**

These are formed by a laboratory technician and are made by melting porcelain powders in a high temperature furnace. In order for the technician to have a tooth shape to work on, moulds of your teeth have to be made and sent to the laboratory. The technician fabricates a replica model of your



teeth, and constructs the veneers on this. The veneers are thin, translucent and look just like tooth structure. These veneers are also 'etched' ie. Prepared with a special acid which creates microscopic pores into which the 'bonding resin' or glue, engages and locks the veneer securely to your primed and bonded teeth.

#### ADVANTAGES

Porcelain is fired in a vacuum furnace, which means there are no air bubbles in the porcelain after it cools and hardens. This is in direct contrast to composite veneers which often contain microscopic voids and air bubbles which are not immediately apparent, but which fill up with stains, (tea, coffee, red wine and some foods), and eventually show up as small black dots or fine lines.

Porcelain has a high surface glaze or gloss, which cannot be removed with tooth brushing and will not stain as easily as composite veneers. Porcelain also has a higher strength (but is not guaranteed against occasional breakage).

The surface texture of porcelain can be made to mimic that of enamel, which has very slight ridges, lumps and bumps across the tooth surface. Unfortunately, the polishing procedure for composite veneers generally results in a fairly flat surface texture and so does not look as natural.

Porcelain does not need polishing in the gap and between the teeth because it has a glazed surface. It doesn't stain and keeps on looking good longer than any other material. It is easily cemented in, and because of this there are generally no stains visible on any part of the porcelain veneer.

#### DISAVANTAGES

A small percentage of porcelain veneers will come unstuck and some will break. If you are contemplating having resin or porcelain veneers you should be prepared to accept an occasional replacement or repair.

#### **Care of your Veneers**

Daily cleaning – Flossing and using interdental brushes is mandatory. These aids clean the crevices and keep the plaque out of the minute dents, voids and ledges that may be around your veneers. If the gum gets red, swells, bleeds and/or feels sore, floss and brush more – not less. If the problem does not go away, make an appointment with your dentist.

Eating habits – Avoid impact and high stress (ie. Absolutely no biting fingernails or cutting string or tape with your front teeth). Do not bite on ice and take extreme care gnawing meat off bones and cut stone fruit up. If in doubt, don't bite it.

Grinding your teeth – If you grind your teeth, it is advisable that you invest in a night guard, as it is nearly inevitable that you will sustain some type of damage to your veneers because of the grinding action of your teeth. Although this is an additional expense, it is definitely recommended.