



WHAT IS COSMETIC DENTISTRY?



By Scott W. Finlay, DDS, FAGD, FAACD

Cosmetic Dentistry relates to those procedures and techniques that manage the appearance, function and health of an individual's smile.

The ancient Greeks taught us centuries ago that the foundation of aesthetics is essentially a reflection of the relative health of any system. If it is healthy in form and function, it will probably be deemed aesthetic. However, if there are issues that affect the visual appearance of a person's smile to cause us to view it as unaesthetic, then there are probably reasons related to function and health that have gone awry. Those elements that caused the smile to deteriorate in the first place will still be at work until those elements are corrected.

In the simplest sense, the hope would be that every dentist would be a cosmetic dentist. After all, the ultimate goal in dentistry is to make teeth look and function like teeth. The reality is however, that some dentists have had more training than others focusing on those criteria related to the health, function and appearance of the smile.

As with all professions, the journey to become proficient in one's field requires a lifetime of learning. In dentistry this learning continues from the day the dentist begins his or her practice until the day they retire. Materials, procedures and knowledge evolve everyday. It is the responsibility of the dentist as an advocate for the dental health of their patients to separate the hype from reality and seek those advances that will result in the absolute best esthetics possible.

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The United States is undisputedly the leader in dental esthetics. Dentists from all over the world have the opportunity to seek post-graduate continuing education related to esthetics at centers that offer lecture and hands-on programs from coast to coast. Those continuing education centers, such as The Dawson Academy, focus on a comprehensive vision of esthetics/function without the influence of hype and marketing.

Any attempt to improve the appearance of someone's smile, without first honoring the principles of health and function will be met with a shortened prognosis.

The Dawson Academy is among centers that represent the respected mainstream of literature-based instruction for the practice of quality care today. There are many other centers that offer advanced dental education as well related to dental esthetics.

The goal of a Dawson Dentist is to have the smile you desire the first time it is done. Improper care can result in:

- Bulky unnatural appearing restorations
- Tissue (gums) that bleed and are infected
- Restorations that break or fall off
- Restorations that are in the wrong position
- Restorations that are too big that they affect speech
- Restoration that give the appearance of “bucked teeth”
- Restorations that are monochromatic (one shade) that don’t reflect what we would normally see in nature

Proper care can involve a significant investment. Veneers or crowns delivered by a qualified provider can range from \$1,500 – \$2,500 per tooth depending upon the local and economic conditions and the experience of the restorative dentist. Finding the right dentist is the beginning of a long-term relationship to help insure the health of your smile. Cost and insurance coverage can often be a limiting factor, but always keep in mind that having something done twice, because it didn’t meet expectations the first time is always far more expensive, often yielding a compromised result.

Some practices tout themselves as a destination practice for cosmetic dental care. These are practices that offer cosmetic treatment without providing maintenance and recurring care or periodic check ups after treatment is completed. They provide the restorative care and you return to your “regular dentist” for “cleaning visits”. This is a concern. Ideally, you want the dentist that completed your care and has been intimately involved in what was done, to monitor and help maintain the result. It is beneficial to find a professional, if possible, within a reasonable distance that you will be willing to travel to on an ongoing basis for maintenance and evaluation.

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In the end, you want to put yourself in the hands of a team of providers that has the training, credentials, experience and tenure to meet your needs. Allow the dentist to design a plan that is best for you. It often will involve a variety of techniques and procedures that will produce the most conservative, predictable and durable result possible.