

# Bleaching and simple aesthetic dentistry

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Linda Greenwall offers a simple step-by-step guide to combining bleaching and aesthetic dentistry

Bleaching procedures are becoming more popular among patients than ever before. Many patients request further forms of aesthetic dentistry after undergoing whitening treatments. These aesthetic treatments range from replacements of stained composite restorations, replacing an old mismatched crown, re-making an existing bridge in an aesthetic zone, to a full arch reconstruction. Before embarking on any form of aesthetic dentistry or restorative dentistry, bleaching treatments should be discussed with the patient. Normally bleaching treatments should be undertaken first, followed by the rest of the treatment. This article will discuss how to combine bleaching treatments with aesthetic dentistry.

## Why bleaching and tooth whitening?

When a patient requests changes to the appearance of their teeth, dentists need to understand whether the patient wishes just to change the colour, or whether the patient is unhappy with the form, shape contour or position of the teeth. Often the patient may say that they are aware that the colour is yellow, but that they are happy with the shape of the teeth. Thus the patient is requesting tooth whitening. Bleaching is simple to undertake, and a discussion about which type of bleaching the patient would like to undertake can follow. The treatment options for

bleaching vary. Home bleaching treatments involves making custom trays for a patient. The patient places the bleaching material in the tray and this is normally worn overnight. Other options, which some patients prefer, include in-surgery power whitening procedures.

## Treatment planning

Planning treatment for bleaching and aesthetic dentistry has to be carefully considered. The aims and objectives of the treatment need to be evaluated first in order to include all procedures into the correct sequence of the patient's treatment. Bleaching can easily be incorporated into a restorative treatment plan, regardless of the age of the patient. Interdisciplinary approaches may be necessary and need to be carefully planned to integrate treatment in a well-ordered manner; should bleaching be used before, during or after restorative dentistry? This often depends on the case, the complexity, the time that it will take, and the patient's needs and wishes. Some dentists may consider the bleached colour as the base-line from which to start all restorative dentistry. It is often preferable to bleach the teeth prior to commencing advanced restorative dentistry. Bleaching prior to restorative dentistry is undertaken when a change in tooth morphology is required in addition to a shift in shade (Small, 1998).

Ask the patient if they are happy with the colour of the

teeth at their initial evaluation appointment. Often patients will express a desire to have lighter teeth, and, with this information, bleaching treatment can be added into the correct stage of treatment. It is not appropriate to undertake bleaching treatment during the definitive stage of treatment. It is better to place bleaching at the beginning of a treatment plan as, immediately prior to cementing a definitive porcelain crown, the patient may say: 'I really wish I could have all the teeth lighter, but I suppose there is nothing you can do about it?' These days there is something that can be done about it. In this case, it should be explained to the patient that bleaching treatment can be undertaken, and a provisional crown may be fitted. The porcelain would have to be stripped from the existing crown and new porcelain placed. Another option is for the definitive restoration to be cemented with provisional cement while bleaching is undertaken, and the teeth are lightened.

It is always best to wait a month after bleaching to let the shade 'settle' prior to selecting the new shade of the teeth. Careful pre-planning would eliminate this costly crisis from occurring.

## Shade matching the bleached dentition with the indirect restorations

The process of matching fixed



Dr Linda Greenwall is a specialist in prosthodontics and restorative dentistry and runs a multi-disciplinary private practice in Hampstead, London. Linda lectures internationally on all aspects of combining bleaching with aesthetic and restorative dentistry.

