



YOUR LOOK

## askthesmileexpert

By Debra King, DDS, FAACD



Before

# A Choice your new smile will Appreciate

**Q: Is there really a difference between the porcelain veneers you can get from one dental office and another?**

**A:** Yes, there is a real blend of art and science behind high-end aesthetic dentistry. All veneers are not created equal. Look for cosmetic dentists with extensive training in the art of smile design, which determines the colors, line angles, shapes, thickness, translucency, occlusion, and many other factors

**Q: What about off-the-shelf tooth-whitening products?**

**A:** If improperly applied, whitening agents might not give you the whiteness you were hoping for. We strongly recommend that your whitening program be done under a dentist's supervision. After a thorough oral examination, the dentist will evaluate your particular whitening needs, and recommend the treatment that will give you the best results.

Not every veneer practitioner is created equal. Here's what to look for in a dental-makeover artist.

that are prescribed to the laboratory. The lab then makes the veneers by hand to these specifications. Veneers should be custom-designed to fit your face, smile, gender and personality. Done correctly, they look and feel like real teeth. You can usually be as much a part of the selection process as you wish, but part of why you select a cosmetic dentist is his or her experience and artistry in what looks great. Computer imaging as well as before-and-after photos of other cases will help you decide on the style, shape, and color that work best for you.

**Q: Can someone be too young or too old for teeth whitening?**

**A:** Whitening has become the most-demanded cosmetic procedure for patients under 20. After childhood, age is not a factor, and most people can benefit from whitening.

**Q: How can I repair worn, chipped, or cracked teeth?**

**A:** Veneers cover flaws but reflect light like natural tooth enamel. Custom-made by hand, they are micro-thin and look totally natural. Permanently bonded to the front surface of a tooth, to restore or improve position, shape and tooth color, they can make a dramatic, immediate difference to one's smile and overall facial appearance. Veneers are wonderful for fixing common problems such as midline spaces (the gap-toothed look of the two front upper teeth) or chipped, crooked, missing, discolored, pitted, malformed, or improperly positioned teeth. Once only accessible to the wealthy and top Hollywood stars and models, veneers are now a popular way for many people to obtain the smile of their dreams.



After

Ensuring great veneer results begins with choosing a cosmetic dentist with the eye of a grand master artist. PHOTO COURTESY OF ATLANTIC CENTER FOR COSMETIC DENTISTRY

**Q: How can I avoid getting oral cancer?**

**A:** The best thing you can do to avoid oral cancer is to regularly visit your dentist twice a year for checkups that include an oral cancer exam. You should also avoid using alcohol or tobacco products, prolonged exposure to sunlight, and apply lip balm with sunscreen. Eating plenty of fruits and vegetables, which provide anti-cancer vitamins and antioxidants, will also help. □

*Debra King, DDS, FAACD, is one of only two women dentists and one of only 35 dentists in the world to achieve Fellowship status with the American Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry. She is the founding president of the Atlanta Society of Cosmetic Dentistry and is the president of the Atlanta Center for Cosmetic Dentistry, which has been profiled by USA Today, CBS, Vogue, and The Wall Street Journal, and has been described as "the Ritz-Carlton of Cosmetic Dentistry." Dr. King is a graduate of the University of Tennessee Dental School.*