

American Choppers

Today's Perfect Teeth Get a Little Out of Line.

"Smiles are looking too much alike." This is strange criticism coming from Dr. Smile himself, Jonathan B. Levine, the man who credits himself with shaping Christie Brinkley's "iconic? American smile." Levine is a prosthodontist, an expert in the restoration and replacement of teeth. He is sizing up the smiles on "The Swan" and "Extreme Makeover."

Not only are teeth "whiter than nature," says Levine, perhaps a bit disingenuously--as he is responsible for the at-home whitening kit GoSmile--but also "the teeth are too even." In nature, a tooth won't always be flush with its neighbor. Within certain strict boundaries, Levine likes to see some imperfection because it renders the hand of the dentist invisible. This is his art.

Levine speaks in the language of show business: the mouth, he says, is a stage; when the

The White Stuff: Some of the best central incisors in the business belong to the actresses from left to right, Julia Roberts, Halle Berry and Sarah Jessica Parker.

lips part, "the curtain is going up," revealing the central incisors, or "dominant players." In Julia Roberts's mouth, the curtain goes way up and out, revealing not only the dominant players up to the gum line, but also the spear carriers waiting in the wings. Levine adores this "high, wide" smile: "You name a famous actress or model, and chances are, she has that smile."

Though such a grin is a gift of anatomy, enormous improvements can still be made, following specific aesthetic rules. For example, the ratio of width for the six top middle teeth follows the golden mean used in building the Parthenon. The width of the second incisors should be 61.8 percent of the center incisors, and the canines 61.8 percent of the second incisors. The width of the central incisors should be 80 percent of the length. As for length, incisors can be from 10 to 12

millimeters long. With the mouth at rest, a woman of 30 should be showing 3.7 millimeters of top incisors. As a person ages, "the soft tissue goes south," so less top tooth will show. To make a mouth look younger, Levine can lengthen top teeth by a millimeter or so.

Levine interviews patients to determine whether they want straight, white Halle Berry teeth, or healthy but more natural-looking Sarah Jessica Parker ones (also a patient). The patient then wears a resin mock-up home for friends and family to review. "That's the dress rehearsal," he says. And what if she wants what Levine calls "the media smile," a little too straight and a little too white? "Then that's what I'll give her," he answers without hesitation.

Mary Tannen



Your Positive Image

Dental restorations are not just for people with broken, damaged or missing teeth. Many people just don't like the way their teeth or smile looks. They may choose to go beyond a

functional dental restoration, selecting a complete cosmetic dentistry makeover with porcelain veneers. Modern dentistry builds a bridge between reality and the possibility to create

sensational smiles. Beautiful healthy smiles inspire spontaneity and reflect confidence, helping people look better, smile more and feel healthier.

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OFFICE INFORMATION

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Healthy Teeth Help You Live

Did you know that your dental health could affect your overall general health? Having a beautiful, healthy smile isn't just about looking good. U.S. Surgeon General, David Satcher, MD, Ph.D., reports that neglecting oral health can promote deadly diseases such as kidney and heart disease, oral cancer, diabetes and/or respiratory ailments.

Since your oral health mirrors your general health you can take steps to prevent future problems. Proper nutrition, fluoride and optimum oral hygiene will help keep your teeth and gums healthier for life. Regular

checkups and tooth cleanings also prevent problems. Even with the best of care some dental problems can still occur. Old crowns and amalgam fillings may need a redo--they don't last forever. Accidents or dental trauma can cause missing or broken teeth that also may need to be restored. An old denture or partial may need to be replaced or relined to restore eating comfort and preserve the health of supporting bone and gum tissue.

Silver fillings are 50% mercury and 50% silver.

Toothpaste fillings?

Scientists in Japan may have found a way to prevent dentists from ever having to drill and fill small holes in teeth again. A new toothpaste containing crystals of hydroxyapatite--the same material found in natural tooth enamel--is being used to create seamless repair of small cavities.

The paste, developed by researchers at Japan's FAP Dental Institute, is the subject of a report in the Feb. 24 issue of Nature. Currently, dentists must drill away healthy tooth structure to make room for amalgam or composite fillings even for small cavi-

ties. Kazue Yamagishi, DMD, one of the developers of the paste, says the "synthetic material can reconstruct enamel without prior excavation."

Although it sounds like a product suited for home use, the paste will still have to be applied in a dentist's office due to its acid ity and high concentration of hydrogen peroxide, which could cause inflammation of the gums. It also won't do any good for patients that currently have cavities because, according to Dr. Yamagishi, it will not be available to dentists for three years.

Do I have cracked Teeth?

A dentist can help

How would I know

- teeth hurt upon biting, and pain disappears right away;
- cold or hot drinks cause sharp and immediate pain.

How does it happen?

- Years of biting down on hard objects;
- Teeth clenching and grinding;
- Accident that affects the mouth;

--stress on heavily filled teeth.

How are cracked teeth treated?

- craze lines, the tiny cracks that affect only the outer tooth enamel, cause no discomfort and require no treatment, but they can be hidden with cosmetic veneers.
- deeply cracked teeth may require crowns to reinforce the tooth's structure, or root canal treatment if dental pulp is affected.

Bruxism & TMD

Get regular exams and prevent chronic problems

We are committed to preventive dentistry, so we are always on the alert for symptoms that could lead to chronic difficulties like temporomandibular joint disorder (TMD). This is a common problem that involves the joints used in chewing, swallowing, and talking. TMD can lead to localized symptoms or seemingly unrelated headaches and earaches. One of the first culprits we look for during regular examinations is bruxism.

Bruxism is the name for forceful grinding and/or clenching of your teeth. Grinding is usually noisy; clenching is silent. Either can create so much stress on the jaw joints that patients experience serious and even debilitating muscle spasms and pain, common symptoms of TMD.

Many individuals are unaware that they "brux," so we look for telltale signs that include:

- worn-down teeth;
- sensitive teeth;
- chipped or broken teeth;
- cracked or loose restorations;
- scarring of the tongue and cheeks.

Although earlier attempts to cure bruxism have ranged from sound alarms, electrical stimulation, psychotherapy, hypnosis, and drugs, we can now recommend simple effective dental solutions. Some act like a crutch to rest the jaw joints while others encourage a natural reflex that stops your jaw automatically to protect your teeth and jaw joints.

We recommend regular dental visits so that we can monitor your oral health--and prevent little problems of all kinds from getting bigger.