

DENTISTRY

QUESTION: How will composites make my teeth look better?

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ANSWER: Composites are tooth-colored plastic-based materials reinforced with glass particles. These resin materials have long been used to restore cavities and defects in front teeth. In the last decade, significant improvements have been made in the mechanical and esthetic properties of these resins. As a result, posterior composites are an esthetic alternative to silver fillings (dental amalgams for back teeth, molars and premolars).

Posterior composites have several advantages. They require less removal of the tooth structure and can strengthen the tooth. They also bond adhesively to the tooth and are highly esthetic tooth-colored fillings.

Patients are always looking for new ways to improve their smile. After a visit to their dentist, they want to be rewarded with more pleasing, natural-looking fillings rather than gray areas. Since composite fillings are tooth colored, they blend well with the enamel of the tooth, giving the patient a more healthy appearance when they laugh, talk and smile.

The technique used to place posterior composites in back teeth takes more time than silver fillings. The tooth has to be isolated from saliva and bleeding, and the material is added in very small increments at a time. An ultraviolet light is used to harden or cure these fillings in place. These restorations may cost a little more than silver fillings as a result.

Posterior composites are not recommended if patients grind their teeth excessively day or night. Due to advances in modern dental materials and techniques, there are new ways to repair damaged



or decayed teeth and replace old fillings.

I always recommend that patients consider their individual needs and make an informed decision, one that will make them smile with more confidence for years to come. ■

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