

▶ **THE BEST BOUTIQUE SALONS** (p.62)

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- ▶ Top Stylists Under \$50
- ▶ **Earth-Friendly**
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- ▶ New Spa Treatments

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WHAT'S NEW IN COSMETIC DENTISTRY

Practitioners say that most patients are seeking a natural, cleaner-looking, more attractive smile—not a hyper-white grin full of freakishly even teeth. Veneers and whitening are great options. While over-the-counter whitening kits will help somewhat on the teeth in the front of the mouth, the fastest, most dramatic results come from a dentist.

PROCEDURE: More Natural-Looking Veneers

DESCRIPTION: Veneers are very thin laminates made to cover teeth that are stained, misshapen or chipped. **WHAT'S NEW:** Today's veneer materials have a natural translucency, says Dr. Cynthia Pauley of Brookside Dental in Bellevue. The technique of placing veneers is improving too, says cosmetic dentist Shawn Keller of Redmond: "We can do more with removing way less tooth structure." **HOW LONG IT TAKES:** Veneers can often be placed within two visits, transforming discolored or misshapen teeth. **COST:** \$1,500 per tooth. **WHO SHOULD HAVE IT DONE:** Those with deep staining that can't be fixed with professional bleaching or those with chipped or otherwise misshapen teeth. **RECOVERY TIME:** None. **HOW LONG IT LASTS:** 10 or more years. **WHAT THE PROS SAY:** "We now can restore teeth to a very, very esthetically high level," says Pauley, who has taught restorative dentistry at the University of Washington. "The future is only going to get better." She adds, "The materials are really good, quite natural. The ability to cover up things like tetracycline staining is very, very good."

PROCEDURE: Gentler Whitening

DESCRIPTION: There are several whitening methods, but in one common one, a bleaching solution is spread over the patient's teeth in the dentist's office. A special light is then applied. Some whitening procedures can leave patients with one to three days of sensitive teeth. **WHAT'S NEW:** Whiteners are much gentler now, say Keller and Pauley. **TIME FOR PROCEDURE:** One hour. **WHO SHOULD DO IT:** Those with yellowing, dingy or dull-looking teeth. **COST:** \$700 **WHAT THE PROS SAY:** "We have better whitening [materials] with less sensitivity," Pauley says. "I think we'll get to an area where we have whitening with virtually no sensitivity." *E.P.*