

Top 10 Critical Things You Should Know Before You Select a Cosmetic Dentist

Cosmetic dentistry is an investment in the future of your smile. And, like any investment, you'll want to do a little research before making a final decision. These guidelines can help you choose the practitioner who's right for you.

1. **Check the doctor's credentials.**

Unlike other dental specialties (oral surgery, orthodontics, etc.), cosmetic dentistry is not recognized by the American Dental Association (ADA) as a specialty. However, cosmetic dentists can receive accreditation through the American Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry (AACD). The dentist should also be licensed through the state dental board.

2. **Investigate the doctor's training.**

The best cosmetic dentistry practitioners didn't just go to dental school; they also completed extensive post-graduate training programs that focus specifically on issues of cosmetic dentistry. In addition, the best dentists regularly attend continuing education classes to stay up-to-date on new procedures and materials.

3. **Start with a consultation.**

Going in for a consultation is a great way to learn more about a dentist and dental practice. Consultations are generally inexpensive, and are sometimes even offered for free. Talk to the dentist before you commit to anything. Remember, it's your job to make an educated decision.

4. **Look for smile design experience.**

Cosmetic dentistry is as much art as it is science. In general, the more smiles a dentist has designed, the better that dentist's work will be. Smile design is about more than just your teeth; the dentist should also consider your lips, gum line, mouth shape and facial structure.

5. **Communication is key.**

It's essential that you be able to talk to your dentist - and that your dentist will listen to you! There's a lot of dialogue that needs to go into an individual long-term treatment plan. If you feel bullied, pressured, or rushed, then that's probably not the right dentist for you.

6. **Look at before and after photos.**

Take a look at the dentist's portfolio before you make up your mind. Pay specific attention to cases that are similar to yours. Make sure that the photos are of actual work done by the dentist, not just stock photos.

7. **Don't pay too much - or too little.**

Some dentists charge more by marketing themselves as high-end celebrity cosmetic dentists offering Hollywood smile makeovers. Other dentists try to make up for poor materials and shoddy work by offering low prices. Beware the extremes.

8. **An honest dentist sets realistic expectations.**

Watch out for doctors who promise more than they can deliver. You want a dentist who will tell you what can and cannot be done for your smile. You need to know how long the process will take, what you'll have to do, and any complications that could occur.

9. **Technology is cool, but it's not the only thing.**

A dentist with high-tech modern equipment is more likely to be up-to-date on modern techniques. At the same time, however, don't let yourself be dazzled by a dentist's fancy tools; what really matters is if the dentist knows how to use them properly.

10. **A good lab technician is a valuable asset.**

The dentist might decide on the treatment plan, but it's the lab technician who'll actually fabricate the porcelain veneers or crowns that will be gracing your new smile. Great dentists are proud of their lab technicians and the materials they use.