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How to Get A BESPOKE SMILE



With the influence of Hollywood and the recent flood of “selfies”, having an attractive smile seems more imperative than ever before. Recognising the significance of straight, pearly whites early on, DR ERNEST REX TAN brought cutting-edge aesthetic dental technologies to Singapore in the 90s

– he was the first to introduce Britesmile Laser Teeth Whitening in Asia, for example – and since then has developed his own signature treatments available across four Smile Inc. dental branches. We spoke with him about the key to a great grin.

What trends are you seeing in the cosmetic dental industry?

People always want whiter, straighter, nicer smiles. When I started in the industry, cosmetic dentistry wasn't so prevalent. These days, patients don't just come in for scaling and polishing – they also ask how they can improve their smiles. It's an equal number of men and women asking for this, too, which shows how highly regarded one's smile is, no matter the gender. Never underestimate the impact it can have on self-esteem; a great smile has really become a commodity.



Shiny New Digs

Smile Inc. recently opened its new One Raffles Place branch (#01-61 Tower 2) which, like its sister locations (in Mandarin Gallery, Suntec City Mall and The Sail in Marina Bay), is a one-stop-shop for a host of dental services ranging from cleaning and scaling to aesthetic procedures such as implants, laser whitening, Smile Inc. Makeover, Smile Lift and Instant Straight White Teeth.

Why the increased demand?

Smiles make a big difference in first impressions, and a lot of people understand that. Many of our patients come in before interviews, speaking engagements and other special occasions, to have their teeth cleaned, whitened or realigned.

The competitive job market has also contributed to this. Those working in high-stress jobs – in, say, finance, commodities or oil and gas – can develop the habit of clenching or grinding their teeth, which results in cracking and chipping. Many have discoloration due to all the coffee they drink, too.

Has Hollywood had much of an effect?

Definitely – a lot of people come in asking for the “Hollywood smile”; some even bring in photos of celebrities whose smiles they’d like to have. The media has really made people more aware over the past decade, with reality programmes like *Extreme Makeover* showing different

types of cosmetic dental procedures, and more and more brands marketing whitening products to consumers.

And social media, too, presumably.

Yes, a lot of people post pictures of themselves and others on Facebook and other forms of social media, which creates a desire to look as presentable as possible at all times. People want to look as good as they can in all of those posted photos.

What’s your approach to helping patients attain the best possible smiles that are most suited to them?

Cosmetic dentistry doesn’t just focus on the mouth area, but on the face as a whole. Taking a holistic approach, we not only look at the teeth, but also address factors such as facial shape, symmetry and proportion, as well as age, gender and skin tone. For example, we have to consider which shade of teeth matches the complexion, and ensure that the patient’s teeth are anatomically proportionate to his or her face. We really get into the nitty-gritty of aesthetics. Since there’s no standard recipe, we build a customised solution for each individual.

This personalised approach goes hand in hand with the fact that we’re a multidisciplinary practice, with a myriad of specialists from periodontists to root canal experts at each branch. This means patients can have different types of work done, all in one place, eliminating any lag time or having to go back and forth. It’s been a very efficient approach, and one that our patients really appreciate.

How did you develop the Instant Straight White Teeth procedure, and what does it entail?

The patients with crooked teeth that I saw had usually been referred to me by orthodontists. Sure, braces will straighten your teeth, but they can leave gaps once teeth are shifted. I was seeing many instances of this, with the patients having to go back and forth between my office and the orthodontist’s. Not only was it a

hassle for patients to frequently get their wires tightened, but also there’s a social stigma that the patients must deal with as grown adults with braces. Nobody in their thirties wants to sit around with kids in an orthodontist’s waiting room – they just don’t belong there.

I decided to develop a customised solution that would allow patients to get a straight smile without braces, and all in one place. In 1997 I introduced Instant Straight White Teeth, which was a game-changer, and is extremely popular to this day. It’s a non-surgical procedure that involves adjusting, aligning and reshaping teeth in just two visits, saving patients from years of braces and retainers, and any necessary extractions. Even those with busy schedules can squeeze in this type of treatment – it’s such a quick yet effective fix.

What other treatments have become your signatures?

Since there’s no one-size-fits-all solution, I felt it was best to blend multiple cosmetic dental techniques to enhance each individual’s unique features, resulting in a bespoke smile. The Smile Inc. Makeover combines a series of methods including the Instant Straight White Teeth procedure, laser whitening and the Smile Lift – a procedure done for patients with collapsed smiles – to straighten, whiten and reshape teeth.

What’s the best part of your job?

It’s really rewarding to know that, in just one session, we can really change someone’s self-image and outlook on life by adjusting and whitening his or her teeth. We often see an immediate change in patients’ confidence.

What’s the key to a great smile?

I think awareness and the desire to have a good smile are key. If you’re aware of the importance of having a great smile, you’ll put in the effort to maintain it. If you feel you don’t have a great smile, or think there are things you can improve, it’s important to seek out a good dentist. **SM**

smileinc.com.sg