

# her world

SEPTEMBER 1998 \$5.00

**20**  
most  
beautiful  
Asian  
women

**NEVER HAD A  
BOYFRIEND  
(YOU'RE NOT ALONE)**

**Raped  
and left  
to die**

**I WANNA  
BE A  
TAI-TAI**  
(every girl's  
secret wish?)

**Axed!**  
3 WOMEN  
WHO GOT  
RETRENCHED



**White  
teeth in  
two hours**  
(permanently)

**Fall's hip  
parade**

**EASY HAIR, LONG SKIRTS  
SOFT LITTLE TOPS**

If your discount  
hair salon card  
is missing,  
please tell your  
newsagent.

A shadow on your smile? Zap it away with lasers — the newest way to whiten teeth — instantly, painlessly, and permanently.  
By Ann Peters



## OPEN

## WHITE

So your teeth are in pretty good shape — no cavities, gum or orthodontic problems? Your only wish: Sparkling pearlies. Here's good news. Lasers — the hottest thing in American dentistry — can give you baby whites. Local dentists using lasers, like Dr Ernest Rex Tan at Supersmile Inc., can whiten teeth by 10 to 13 shades (that's in the super sparkling range). Non-laser bleaching, on average, gets it only two or three shades lighter.

### Why are people baring their teeth for laser treatment?

- It works on all stains. While regular teeth bleaching is only good for surface stains, the laser even shifts internal discolourations caused by tetracycline (brown-grey teeth caused by childhood use of the antibiotic tetracycline); fluorosis (white spots on teeth caused by drinking fluoridated water or using fluoride products); and stains due to decay, dead teeth and blood disease.
- Instant results: Leave the clinic with a whiter smile. The job is

done in one two-hour visit, with a follow-up check and polish three weeks later.

- No pain. No shots, no anaesthetic, just a bit of jaw ache from having your mouth propped open.
- Permanently pearly. Stains are gone for good. Coffee and tea stains may recur but they are easily cleaned off.
- Toughens teeth. Your teeth don't weaken or get more porous. The final coating actually strengthens teeth.



## Where can you go?

Dr Ernest Tan, a dapper young dentist in private practice, read about it ("I didn't believe it either") and, while on honeymoon in America, contacted the BriteSmile people. Now he's zapping teeth with lasers (\$1,800 for 20 front teeth, but you can pay in instalments) at his smart clinic in Suntec City. Grace Chong-Tan, Dr Tan's wife, is the director of this stylish, beauty salon-like clinic with Picasso prints on the wall.

## What happens?

Dr Tan takes a Polaroid of your teeth to determine colour, and a whole-mouth X-ray to check for problems like hairline fractures and cavities which, if found, have to be filled first. Otherwise, he covers your entire mouth with protective gel, carves out the areas he'll be working on, paints on a hydrogen peroxide-based, patented bleaching formula, and zaps away with two lasers. These lasers activate the bleaching process (which continues for a few days). Then he applies a protective coating which is supposed to strengthen teeth.

## How well does it work?

About 50 people have already tried it in Singapore. Some, he says, were so happy they hugged him. The ones we spoke to were too shy to reveal their names, faces or teeth, but claimed to be happy with the results. Among them was a company director sent by his wife, who lamented the high cost, and two women executives in their late 20s, who have to look good on the job. One allayed her fears by scouring the Internet for information. The other was egged on by an

American friend. Both echoed the view that their teeth were whiter but didn't look fake, and they had no after-effects.

Still, the proof of the pudding, as they say, is in the eating. Will Dr Tan try it out on his wife? "Do you think she needs it?" he asks. It's an obvious no. She's all clear skin, long legs and, yes, sparkling teeth.

And himself? Again no. Like all dentists, he takes care of his teeth. He never has to do unto himself what he does unto others.

## Who discovered it?

American cosmetic dentist David Yarborough figured that if lasers can remove freckles, they can whiten teeth. He teamed up with Madison Avenue's dentist of the rich and famous, Dr Irwin Smigle (of Supersmile tooth-paste fame) to sell it under the BriteSmile System.

Although still a very new technique (but with the American Food & Drug Administration's approval) hordes of Americans read about it in women's magazines like *Vogue*, and had a go. The *Vogue* writer who tried it saw her teeth go from A3 (moderately yellow) to near A1 (the whitest). "Not perfect but still smiling," she wrote. *Mademoiselle's* writer said her teeth were definitely whiter and didn't look fake. Both didn't report bothersome after-effects.

## Non-laser options

- **Bleaching done by dentists:** A hydrogen peroxide-based formula is used, sometimes with heat lamps.
- **Customised tooth trays:** Soft gel trays containing bleaching formula, made by dentists to fit your mouth, must be worn for weeks before results can be seen.
- **Caps, crowns, laminates, veneers:** They only do a cover-up job. The real tooth is painted over or hidden under a false tooth.
- **Whitening toothpastes:** Most clean rather than whiten.