



HealthWatch

New Dental Procedure Reshapes Smile

Kristine Johnson: Whether you use braces or surgery to improve your smile, it can be a painful process. But a new procedure is offering dramatic results with little discomfort. And also today, there is good news about exercise and Alzheimer's disease. CBS 2's Dr. Holly Phillips joins me now with more details.

Dr. Holly Phillips: Sure Kristine, well it seems like with exercise it's always good news and today's no exception. It seems getting plenty of exercise may slow the effects of Alzheimer's disease. A preliminary study shows people with early Alzheimer's who were physically fit, suffered less brain shrinkage than those who are not as fit. The brain size decreases normally as we age but the rate is doubled with those with Alzheimer's.

Cosmetic dentistry has come a long way since basic braces and now gums are getting a make over too. A new laser technique is making the gum lift a fast and easy fix.

VO: Lida Lenik has a new reason to smile.

Lida Lenik: I don't like the way my smile is. The drive is to look better and feel better, to not be self-conscious when I smile.

VO: She's not only unhappy with her teeth but also her gum line.

Dr. Joseph Zelig: Very often patients have problems with their gum lines. They have gum lines that are uneven, that are asymmetrical, that are disproportional.

VO: To change that Periodontist Joseph Zelig is giving Lenik a gum lift.

Dr. Joseph Zelig: The gums are the frame around the teeth just like a frame around a picture.

VO: Zelig used to do the procedure with a scalpel which required heavy anesthesia and stitches. He now uses a laser to remove unwanted gum in less than an hour.

Dr. Joseph Zelig: There is minimal to no bleeding, there's not discomfort to the patient, there's very often no stitches needed.

VO: A look at Lenik before and after the procedure shows the improvement. The gum between her front teeth is gone and with the new row, the dentist was able to add veneers to brighten and straighten her smile.

Lida Lenik: I think it looks much, much better. I'm real happy with it. Now I can't wait for the next family reunion so I can really smile in the pictures.

Dr. Holly Phillips: With the old, more invasive procedure patients could only have liquids for two weeks until their stitches came out. The new laser technique involves soreness for only a couple of days and you can eat normally almost right away. And Kristine even though it's quick and easy it's not cheap, not surprisingly, it's about \$500 dollars a tooth.

Kristine Johnson: I'm guessing health insurance probably doesn't cover this since it does seem to be cosmetic.

Dr. Holly Phillips: (laughing) Exactly, they tend to not want to spend like that, um, but many people find it worth it.