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Don't just grin and bear it!

NEW YORK, New York--The "no pain, no gain" mind set has always been associated with beauty. From sweating away the hours at the gym to going under the knife for a nip and tuck, American culture has accepted the harsh reality that "beauty is pain."

That old cliché rings true especially when applied to dentistry--stories detailing how dentists shave teeth down to a nub in order to apply veneers and how they are seemingly oblivious to their patients' discomfort have come to define the industry.

Dental phobias have flourished under these circumstances with estimates revealing that 30 to 40 million people avoid seeing a dentist because of anxiety and fear.

A survey reviewed by the Columbia University College of Dental Medicine found that the majority of people who haven't visited a dentist for 12 months list fear of pain as the main factor. Since the choice to undergo cosmetic dental procedures stems entirely from the patient, fear of pain is even more likely to deter someone from taking advantage of cosmetic dentistry.

According to New York City prosthodontist Dr. Nargiz Schmidt, there is a clear need for truly pain-free smile makeover services.

"The concept of pain-free cosmetic dentistry is often taken with a grain of salt. Most patients trust that "pain-free" or "virtually painless" usually means they will be experiencing pain," said Dr. Schmidt. "We wanted to change that for our patients, and have introduced several services that eliminate pain completely." Dr. Schmidt and partner Dr. Joseph Zelig are introducing Pain-Free Smile Make overs at their Manhattan practice Smile in the City by utilizing Waterlase technology and IV sedation to guarantee patients will have a comfortable treatment.

Painless smile make overs spread through word of mouth Thanks to the recent advancements in cosmetic dentistry, Drs. Schmidt and Zelig are able to create perfect smiles without pain or unwanted side effects. "Compared to ten years ago, a cosmetic dentistry patient today has significant choices," states Dr. Zelig, "as with every other health procedure, there is no 'one size fits all' treatment. Our patients communicate their expectations and desired results to us and allow our dental team to prescribe the most attractive option for them."

Lumineers. For more than a decade, porcelain veneers have been the cosmetic dentist's treatment of choice for those who want to permanently alter the appearance of their teeth. While veneers create dramatic results, they also require significant commitment from patients.

"Traditional veneers require tooth structure removal which can lead to post-placement sensitivity," explained Dr. Schmidt. Dr. Schmidt now in

most cases recommends Lumineers to her patients who want to improve their smile without the extreme commitment. Lumineers are made from patented cerinate porcelain and are as thin as contact lenses, allowing them to be placed directly onto existing teeth without alteration.

"Lumineers allow people to improve their smile without sacrificing enamel," Dr. Schmidt said. "When working with existing teeth, their shape and size helps guide placement and proportion--something that traditional veneers often miss."

Waterlase. One of the most important art forms in cosmetic dentistry is gum revision. Dr. Zelig, a periodontist, performs gum revision at Smile in the City and has introduced Waterlase Technology to his patients as an alternative to gum shaping with a scalpel.

"Most patients expect the majority of discomfort in a cosmetic dental procedure to come from the application of veneers, when in reality, gum revision can be excruciating if not performed with Waterlase," reported Dr. Zelig.

Waterlase combines laser technology with a spray of water for increased accuracy and precision. Because the procedure is virtually painless on its own, fewer shots and anesthesia are necessary ensuring the safest procedure possible.

IV Sedation. Previously thought of as "old school," sedation dentistry is making a huge comeback in the U.S. While many dentists turn to nitrous oxide to help patients overcome anxiety, Dr. Zelig holds a permit in intravenous conscious sedation from the New York State Board of Dentistry.

"It is extremely important to our practice to provide a safer and more reliable form of sedation to our patients," said Dr. Zelig. "I use a combination of sedatives and pain relievers administered intravenously to usher patients into a state of complete relaxation and comfort."

According to Dr. Zelig, IV sedation has been undervalued because few dentists see the value of being certified in the procedure.

"While nitrous oxide can provide patients comfort, many patients are extremely skeptical of its safety and effectiveness," adds Dr. Zelig, "doctors can administer nitrous oxide without any training, which can be dangerous for those who are not qualified or prepared for any unwanted side effects."

According to both Drs. Schmidt and Zelig, the possibilities of improvements in cosmetic dentistry are limitless.

"Patients are becoming savvier each year and doing their research," says Dr. Zelig, "by constantly offering our patients the latest technologies we have been able to stay ahead of the trends and give our patients beautiful and natural-looking smiles without pain or discomfort."