SMILE MAKEOVER GUIDE

WHITENING, BONDING, CLEAR ALIGNERS & PORCELAIN VENEERS: FINDING THE RIGHT PATH TO THE SMILE YOU WANT



HIXSON DENTAL GROUP

THE DOCTORS OF
HIXSON DENTAL GROUP
Hixson, TN



From all of us at Hixson Dental Group, thank you for taking the time to learn about your options. Some of our favorite moments in dentistry happen when a patient sees their new smile for the first time. Often it's someone who has spent years smiling with their lips closed, turning away from cameras, or covering their mouth when they laugh.

If that sounds familiar, you're not alone. Stains, chips, gaps, and crooked teeth are some of the most common reasons people feel self-conscious about their smile. The good news is that most of them can be improved, often more easily and conservatively than people expect.

In this guide, we'll walk you through the four treatments we use most in smile makeovers here at Hixson Dental Group: Opalescence professional whitening, cosmetic bonding, SureSmile clear aligners, and porcelain veneers. You'll learn what each one does, who it's best for, what to expect, and how they can work together.

Our goal is to help you understand your options so you can make a confident decision about your smile.

The Doctors of Hixson Dental Group

Why Your Smile Matters

Your smile is one of the first things people notice about you, and how you feel about it affects how often you share it.

99.7%

of Americans say a smile is an important social asset[1]

74%

of adults feel an unattractive smile can hurt a person's chances for career success[1]

48%

say a smile is the most memorable feature after first meeting someone[2]

What is a smile makeover?

A smile makeover is a personalized plan to improve the look of your smile using one or more cosmetic treatments. It isn't one procedure. For one person it might be a few appointments of whitening. For another it could be clear aligners to straighten teeth, followed by whitening and a touch of bonding.

The best plans are built around three things: **your goals**, **the health of your teeth and gums**, and **how much change you want**. Some people want a subtle refresh. Others want a dramatic transformation.

Healthy first, beautiful second

Before any cosmetic treatment, we make sure your teeth and gums are healthy. Treating cavities, gum inflammation, or worn fillings first helps your results look better and last longer.

What Can a Smile Makeover Fix?

Most smile concerns fall into a handful of categories. Here's how each of our four treatments matches up.

Your concern	Whitening	Bonding	Clear aligners	Veneers
Yellow or stained teeth	●			●
Deep stains whitening can't lift		●		●
Small chips or rough edges		●		●
Small gaps between teeth		●	●	●
Crooked or crowded teeth			●	
Bite problems			●	
Uneven, worn, or short teeth		●		●
A complete, uniform new look				●

This chart is a general guide. Your exam will show which options fit your teeth, your bite, and your goals.

Start with the most conservative option

We always look first at treatments that keep as much of your natural tooth as possible. Sometimes whitening or bonding alone gets you the smile you want, with no need to reshape healthy teeth.

Opalescence Professional Whitening

At Hixson Dental Group, we use Opalescence, a trusted professional whitening system. Professional whitening safely lightens the natural color of your teeth. It is the simplest, least invasive way to brighten your smile, and it is often the first step in a smile makeover.



Best for

- Yellowing from coffee, tea, wine, or tobacco
- Teeth that have darkened naturally with age
- Brightening your smile before a wedding, reunion, or big event
- Setting your new shade before bonding or veneers

What to expect

We start by checking your teeth and gums and recording your current shade. Professional whitening can be done in the office, with custom-fitted trays you use at home, or a combination of both. With Opalescence, your dentist will recommend the approach that fits your teeth and your schedule. Many people notice a difference after the very first treatment.

Benefits

- No drilling or reshaping of your teeth
- Fast, noticeable results
- Supervised by your dental team for safety and comfort
- Touch-ups keep your smile bright

Things to consider

- Temporary sensitivity is common during treatment
- Results fade over time, especially with coffee, tea, and tobacco
- Doesn't change the color of crowns, bonding, or veneers[3]
- Some deep or internal stains may not respond

Why professional instead of store-bought?

Over-the-counter kits use one-size-fits-all trays and lower-strength gels. Professional whitening is tailored to your teeth, protects your gums, and lets us check for issues like cavities or exposed roots that can make whitening uncomfortable.

Cosmetic Bonding

Cosmetic bonding uses a tooth-colored composite resin that is sculpted directly onto your teeth, then hardened and polished. It can repair small flaws in a single visit, usually with little or no removal of natural tooth.

Best for

- Small chips, cracks, or rough edges
- Closing small gaps between front teeth
- Evening out teeth that are slightly short or uneven
- Covering an isolated stain or discolored spot

What to expect

After choosing a shade that matches your teeth, we lightly prepare the surface, apply the resin in layers, and shape it by hand. A special light hardens each layer, then we polish it to a natural shine. Most bonding is completed in one appointment, often without numbing.

Benefits

- Usually completed in a single visit
- Little or no removal of natural tooth
- Can be repaired or touched up easily
- A cost-effective way to make small changes

Things to consider

- Can chip, especially with nail biting or chewing ice
- Can pick up stains over time
- Typically lasts about 3 to 10 years before needing touch-ups or replacement[3]
- Won't lighten if you whiten your teeth later

Whiten first, then bond

Bonding is matched to the color of your teeth on the day it's placed and will not respond to whitening later. If you'd like brighter teeth, we'll whiten first so your bonding matches your new shade.[3]

SureSmile Clear Aligners



At Hixson Dental Group, we use SureSmile Clear Aligners. Clear aligners straighten teeth using a series of custom, nearly invisible plastic trays. Each set moves your teeth a small amount, step by step, until they reach their planned position.

Best for

- Crooked, crowded, or rotated teeth
- Gaps and spacing
- Many common bite issues
- Adults who want to straighten their teeth without metal braces

What to expect

We start with a digital scan of your teeth and plan each movement of your SureSmile treatment. You'll switch to a new set of aligners on a set schedule and visit us periodically to check your progress. For best results, aligners are worn 20 to 22 hours a day, removed only to eat, drink anything other than water, and clean your teeth.[4] Many adult cases take about 12 to 18 months, though mild cases can finish sooner.[4]

Benefits

- Nearly invisible while you wear them
- Removable for eating, brushing, and flossing
- No brackets or wires to irritate your mouth
- Straighter teeth are easier to clean

Things to consider

- Only work when you wear them consistently
- Some tenderness when switching to a new set
- You'll need to brush before putting them back in
- A retainer is needed afterward to keep teeth in place[4]

Straight teeth can mean less work later

Straightening first can reduce or even eliminate the need for veneers, letting you keep more of your natural teeth. Many patients finish aligners and then add whitening or a bit of bonding to complete their makeover.

Porcelain Veneers

Porcelain veneers are thin, custom-made shells of porcelain bonded to the front surfaces of your teeth. They can change the color, shape, size, and length of teeth for a complete, natural-looking transformation.



Best for

- Deep stains that whitening can't correct
- Chipped, worn, or uneven teeth
- Teeth that are too small or oddly shaped
- Patients who want a dramatic, uniform new smile

What to expect

Veneers usually take a few visits. We plan the shape and shade of your new smile with you, then gently reshape a thin layer of enamel from the front of each tooth. After we take impressions or a digital scan, a dental lab crafts your veneers, and you may wear temporaries in the meantime. At your final visit we bond the veneers in place and fine-tune your bite.

Benefits

- A complete, natural-looking transformation
- Porcelain is highly stain-resistant
- Long-lasting: one review found about 95% survive 10 years[5]
- Can address color, shape, and size at once

Things to consider

- Usually requires removing a thin layer of enamel, which is permanent
- Can chip or crack, especially with teeth grinding
- May eventually need replacing
- Not ideal if you have untreated gum disease or a heavy grinding habit without a night guard

A long-term commitment

Because veneers typically involve reshaping your natural teeth, the decision is permanent. That's why we take time to plan your smile carefully, answer your questions, and make sure veneers are the right choice before we begin.

Side by Side

Comparing Your Options

Every option has its place. Here's how the four treatments compare at a glance.

	Whitening	Bonding	Clear aligners	Porcelain veneers
Main purpose	Brighter color	Repairs small flaws	Straightens teeth	Total transformation
Typical timeline	One visit to a few weeks	Usually one visit	Months; many adults about 12–18[4]	A few visits over several weeks
Changes natural tooth?	No	Little or none	No	Yes, a thin layer of enamel
Reversible?	Fades naturally	Usually	Teeth can shift without a retainer	No
How long it lasts	Varies; touch-ups help	About 3–10 years[3]	Lasting, with a retainer	Often 10+ years[5]
Ongoing care	Touch-ups, limit stains	Polishing, repairs	Wear your retainer	Night guard if you grind

There's no single "best" treatment

The right choice depends on what you want to change, the condition of your teeth, and how long you want results to last. Many of the best results come from combining treatments, which we cover next.

Combining Treatments

Most smile makeovers use more than one treatment. The order matters, because each step sets up the next.

"Straighten, then brighten"

Clear aligners → **Whitening** → **Bonding (if needed)**

Ideal for crooked or crowded teeth that are also a bit dull. Once teeth are aligned, whitening brightens them, and bonding can smooth any small chips or edges.

"The quick refresh"

Whitening → **Bonding**

Great for teeth that are generally straight but stained, with a chip or small gap or two. Often finished in just a few visits.

"The full transformation"

Clear aligners (if needed) → **Whitening** → **Porcelain veneers**

For people who want a dramatic change in color, shape, and symmetry. Aligning teeth first can mean fewer veneers and less reshaping, and whitening the surrounding teeth lets us match your veneers to a brighter shade.

Why order matters

- **Whitening comes before bonding and veneers,** because those materials won't change color later.[3]
- **Straightening comes before reshaping,** so we remove as little natural tooth as possible.
- **Health comes before everything,** because healthy gums and teeth give the best foundation for lasting results.

Step by Step

Your Smile Makeover Journey at HDG

Here's what the process typically looks like from your first visit to your finished smile.

1

Consultation

Tell us what you love, what you'd like to change, and how much change you want. We'll examine your teeth, gums, and bite and take photos and X-rays.

2

Your personalized plan

We'll explain which treatments fit your goals, in what order, and how long each step takes, so you know exactly what to expect.

3

A healthy foundation

If needed, we'll take care of cleanings, cavities, or gum concerns first so your cosmetic work lasts.

4

Treatment

We complete each step of your plan, checking in along the way to make sure you love how your smile is coming together.

5

Reveal & fine-tuning

We polish, adjust, and make any final tweaks so your new smile looks and feels just right.

6

Keeping it beautiful

Regular checkups and cleanings, plus a retainer or night guard if you need one, help protect your investment.

Caring for Your New Smile

A few simple habits will keep your smile looking its best for years.

Keep your cleanings

Professional cleanings remove surface stains and let us catch small chips or wear before they become bigger problems.

Go easy on staining foods

Coffee, tea, red wine, and tobacco stain natural teeth and bonding. Rinse with water afterward or use a straw for cold drinks.

Wear your retainer

After clear aligners, a retainer keeps teeth from drifting back. Wear it exactly as directed.

Protect against grinding

Clenching and grinding can chip bonding and veneers.[6] A custom night guard is inexpensive protection.

Don't use teeth as tools

Avoid opening packages, biting nails, or chewing ice and pens. These are common causes of chips.

Choose a gentle toothpaste

Highly abrasive "whitening" pastes can dull bonding over time. Ask us which toothpaste is best for you.

Touch-ups are normal

Whitening touch-ups, a polish for bonding, or a small repair are part of keeping any cosmetic work looking fresh. We'll let you know what to expect for your specific treatment.

Questions to Ask Before You Begin

The right questions help you feel confident in your plan. Here are a few worth asking.

- [ ] **Which treatments do you recommend for my goals, and why?**
- [ ] **Are there more conservative options I should consider first?**
  For example, whitening or bonding before veneers.
- [ ] **Will any of my natural tooth need to be removed?**
- [ ] **What order will my treatments happen in, and how long will it take?**
- [ ] **How long should I expect my results to last?**
- [ ] **What maintenance will I need afterward?**
  Touch-ups, retainers, night guards, or polishing.
- [ ] **Do I need any other dental work first?**
- [ ] **How will we choose my new shade and tooth shape?**
- [ ] **What financing options are available?**

There are no silly questions

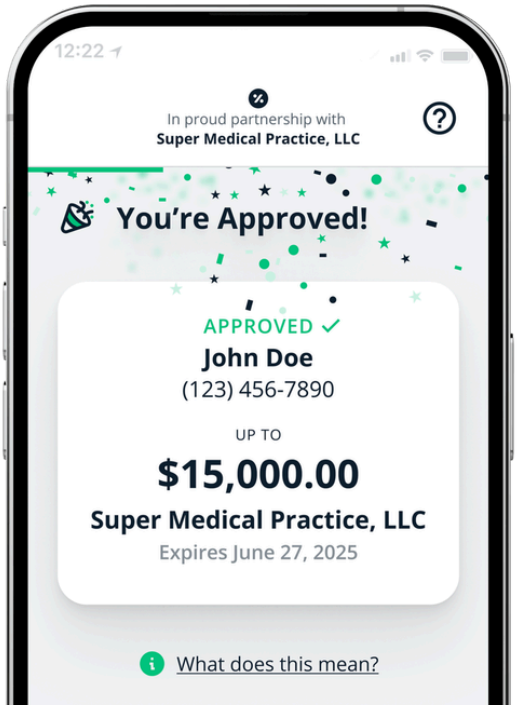
A smile makeover is personal. We want you to understand every step and feel excited, not uncertain, about your plan.

Flexible Financing With Cherry

A smile you love is an investment in your confidence, and you shouldn't have to put it off because of the upfront cost. At Hixson Dental Group, we offer flexible financing, including monthly payment options through Cherry, so you can get started on your smile makeover without straining your budget.

Cherry

- **Fast & Easy Approval**
  Apply in just minutes, right from your phone.
- **Flexible Payment Plans**
  Choose the plan that works best for your budget.
- **No Hidden Fees**
  Transparent terms with no surprises.
- **High Approval Rates**
  More patients qualify compared to traditional financing.



Scan here to apply →

Phase your plan

Many smile makeovers can be done in stages, such as straightening this year and veneers next year, so you can spread the investment over time. We'll help you plan an order that fits both your goals and your budget.

Why Choose Hixson Dental Group?

At Hixson Dental Group, we focus on your whole smile and your long-term health. A smile makeover should look natural, feel comfortable, and last, and it should reflect you.

Here's how we stand apart:

- **Conservative first.** We'll always talk through options that preserve your natural teeth before recommending anything more involved.
- **Results that look like you.** We plan your shade and tooth shapes around your face, your features, and your goals, not a one-size-fits-all "perfect" smile.
- **Complete care under one roof.** Cleanings, Opalescence whitening, bonding, SureSmile clear aligners, and veneers are all handled by the same trusted team.
- **A relationship, not just a procedure.** We listen to your concerns and we're here for you long after your makeover is complete.
- **Help making it affordable.** We'll walk you through flexible monthly financing so you can find a payment that fits your budget.

What your smile consultation includes

- An unhurried conversation about what you'd like to change
- A thorough exam of your teeth, gums, and bite
- A personalized treatment plan with your options explained
- A walkthrough of flexible monthly financing options

Sources & Notes

Statistics in this guide come from published surveys and research and are provided for general education. Individual results vary.

1. American Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry (AACD). Consumer survey findings (2004 study; reported in AACD Whitening Survey, 2012). aacd.com
2. Kelton Global for the American Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry. "Smile is Greatest Asset to Memorable First Impressions, Study Says." Business Wire, February 2013.
3. Cleveland Clinic. "Dental Bonding" (typical lifespan and whitening guidance); NHS guidance on whitening and existing restorations.
4. American Association of Orthodontists guidance on 20–22 hours of daily aligner wear; typical adult clear aligner treatment times as reported by dental providers (2025–2026).
5. Alenezi A, Alsweed M, Alsidrani S, Chrcanovic BR. "Long-Term Survival and Complication Rates of Porcelain Laminate Veneers in Clinical Studies: A Systematic Review." *Journal of Clinical Medicine*, 2021;10(5):1074.
6. Same review (5): survival of porcelain veneers is believed to be influenced by parafunctional habits such as bruxism (teeth grinding).

> This guide is for educational purposes and is not a substitute for a professional exam. Only a consultation can determine which treatments are right for you. Treatment times and results vary from person to person. SureSmile is a registered trademark of Dentsply Sirona. Opalescence is a trademark of Ultradent Products, Inc.

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You deserve a smile you're proud to share in photos, at work, and with the people you love. Whether you're hoping for a simple brightening or a complete transformation, there's a path that fits your goals.

If you're ready to explore your options, we would be honored to meet you. At Hixson Dental Group, we'll listen to what you want, explain your choices clearly, and help you build a plan that feels right, with no pressure.

The Doctors of Hixson Dental Group

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