

## ***What is Dental Bonding?***

Dental bonding is a cosmetic dentistry procedure that bonds material to a tooth. Tooth-colored composite material is applied to a tooth, molded to fit the tooth, allowed to harden and then polished. Tooth-colored dental bonding has greater cosmetic appeal than using silver fillings to fill small cavities. Dental bonding is the easiest and least expensive cosmetic dentistry procedure.

A professional dentist will determine if a patient needs dental bonding to improve the appearance of discolored teeth, close gaps between teeth, make teeth look longer, change the shape of teeth or a tooth. Dental bonding is also a cosmetic alternative to amalgam fillings. It is used to recreate a smile without requiring the reduction of a tooth or teeth. The cosmetic dentist can perform the dental bonding procedure without anesthesia if the bonding is not used to fill a decayed tooth. The entire process takes approximately 15 to 60 minutes for each tooth.

Direct composite restoration or adhesively bonded restorations begin when the dentist uses a rubber dam to isolate the teeth and keep the area dry. The next step is the gentle application of a phosphoric acid solution to the surface of the natural tooth. Acid engraving of the tooth surface strengthens the bond of the composite and adhesive. The dentist will wait 15 seconds before removing the phosphoric acid. A liquid bonding agent is then applied. A special light helps the material to harden and set. The composite is polished and buffed to give the tooth or teeth a smooth finish.

Dental bonding requires only one office visit and the use of anesthesia is usually not necessary unless the bonding fills a decayed tooth. The average cost of dental bonding ranges from \$300 to \$600, but many dental insurance plans cover most of the costs. However, there are some disadvantages of dental bonding. Stains may develop on the bonding material. Material used for porcelain veneers and crowns are stronger and last longer than the material used in dental bonding. Dental bonding can last three to seven years depending upon proper patient care at home.

Patients can retain a healthy smile for many years after the dental bonding procedure by following dental recommendations for proper oral hygiene and avoiding habits that could damage the results of the procedure. After the dental bonding procedure, the dentist will recommend that patients return to the office if there are any issues with the sharp edges of the bonded tooth or teeth or if the tooth feels different while chewing. Recommendations for maintaining the dental bonding include cutting down on coffee, tea and red wine. Smokers should stop smoking to preserve the dental bonding, decrease the risk of gum disease and oral cancer. Patients should also avoid nail biting and chewing hard objects such as ice, pencils and raw carrots.