



Dr Grant McAree

Ask Dr. Grant



DR GRANT IS A RENOWNED COSMETIC DENTIST, TREATING PATIENTS BOTH NATIONALLY AND INTERNATIONALLY. HE IS THE ONLY COSMETIC DENTIST IN THE REGION GRANTED PRACTISING PRIVILEGES AT NUFFIELD HOSPITAL, EXETER

Gaps between teeth – what’s the story?

What are we talking about?

Teeth that are not perfectly in line and touching each other, either due to genetics, dental problems or tooth loss. It’s the opposite of dental crowding where teeth overlap and are crooked. For some people, including celebrities such as Madonna and Lara Stone, gaps are part of their character. For others, multiple gaps can look unsightly and alter the facial symmetry.

What are the choices?

Simply put, you can either add to the teeth, filling in gaps, or push teeth together, closing gaps. To fill in gaps, you can use tooth-coloured cosmetic fillings, bridges, veneers or dental implants. For closing gaps, there’s a choice of braces: the Inman® Speed Brace, which treats the front teeth only, Invisalign® Invisible Braces or fixed braces, both of which treat full arches, and other, custom-made clear aligners which can treat individual teeth. On occasion, teeth can be moved using a brace to create space for an implant.

Can I see the predicted result?

In most cases, yes. This can be done by mocking up wax teeth on a model of the patient’s teeth, which can then be tried in the mouth. Teeth can also be built up using white or tooth-coloured fillings which can be chipped off if the patient isn’t happy. With Invisalign®, a

DVD simulation shows the likely tooth movements, while with Inman®, a model cast is made.

What’s involved?

Cosmetic fillings come in a wide range of shades and degrees of translucency, so can easily be matched to the natural tooth. They also reflect the light in the same way as tooth enamel, making them look completely natural. With veneers, a thin slip of porcelain, custom-made to match the shape and colour of existing teeth, is attached to the front surface of the tooth. With bridges, the teeth either side of the gap are used as anchors for the missing tooth with the colour, again, expertly matched. With dental implants, titanium rods are surgically placed in the jaw bone to hold a crown or bridge. With braces, impressions are taken and then the brace or clear aligners are custom-made to fit

perfectly over the teeth, applying gentle, precise pressure to move teeth.

How long do they last?

With veneers, bridges and crowns, it largely depends on how well you look after them, but 10 to 15 years is a ballpark. Implants should last 15 to 25 years plus. Teeth that have been moved using a brace can move back if a retainer isn’t worn as directed after treatment.

Any downsides?

I always approach gaps with caution and develop treatment plans based on the level of health gain. I always favour minimally-invasive techniques, but sometimes these may not be sufficient to achieve the desired outcome, although for most patients the upsides far outweigh any downsides.

Typical costs?

White fillings from £85; veneers from £500 per tooth; bridges from £300 per unit, but it depends on the number of teeth; Crowns from £300 per tooth; Inman® £1,500 per arch; Invisalign® from £3,500 for both arches. As ever, go for trust and experience, not cost. **DL**

“YOUR PROBLEM IS TO BRIDGE THE GAP WHICH EXISTS BETWEEN WHERE YOU ARE NOW AND THE GOAL YOU INTEND TO REACH” – EARL NIGHTINGALE

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