

Reading Smiles

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What makes a beautiful smile? In many ways, the basics of a great smile mirror the principles of yoga. A beautiful smile radiates vitality. Like yoga it's about proper alignment. And it doesn't just look good, it functions well too. A healthy mouth depends on the shape of each tooth in relation to the others, its alignment, its bite and its position and its relation to the lips and tongue.

We can also read faces for clues to other kinds of health issues that originate in the oral cavity. A weak chin with a bite misalignment, for example, may contribute to low oxygen intake, a headache or neck pain. The telltale signs of sleep apnea - a disruption of breathing during sleep, are often clearly visible on the face. A few signs that we can observe are dark circles under the eyes, an enlarged neck, a double chin showing low tongue posture.... these are all red flags.

It's a happy coincidence that well-functioning and good-looking smiles are so intimately connected. When we achieve the best smile we possibly can, it often changes our lives, making us more social and increasing the release of endorphins which helps our immune system. Just as yoga tones our body, smiling tones and exercises our facial muscles. And a toned face looks younger! After all, beautiful teeth make us want to smile, and smiling is our best natural vitamin.

Age Reversal through Dentistry

While research shows that attractive smiles boost our performance in both the boardroom and boudoir, a beautiful smile has another powerful advantage: it can take years off the face. A wide, white and beautiful smile radiates youth, while cracked, stained or chipped teeth can make us look much older than we really are.

The two upper and lower cuspids (canines) are our longest teeth, with long, firmly implanted roots they provide an actual framework for our smile. The fullness of our lips and mouth is wrapped over these long teeth. If we grind our teeth to the point where they are broken, flattened or severely worn, we end up with an unattractive smile around our mouths, resulting in a much older appearance.

The vast majority of facial aging occurs in the lower third of the face. Even if we look at the face of someone in his or her mid-20s, the early signs of aging may already be setting in. These visible changes include:

- Descent of the eyebrows
- Descent of the nasal tip
- Descent of chin tip
- Sinking of the nasal bone

Signs of aging visible in the mouth are evident when:

- Teeth become crowded
- Teeth wear down
- Tooth shape and proportion change
- Tooth colour changes
- Changes occur to soft tissue.

A decrease in collagen and elastin also causes a laxness and thinning of the skin leading to dramatic changes to the lips and the entire oral complex.

In younger faces we aim to create two or three millimetres of the teeth to be visible when the lips are relaxed. As we get older, through grinding, clenching and other wear and tear, we tend to have less "vertical dimension" – that is, our teeth become shorter. By restoring teeth and preventing further grinding and clenching, we bring back the youthful look of our teeth. Expanding the arch formation of teeth through orthodontics is like augmenting the scaffolding, allowing for better draping of the soft tissues. What's more, a wider smile adds volume and props up the upper lip, thus helping to smooth the wrinkles above the lips and contributing to a younger appearance. ☺

