



AGING SMILE SOS

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We all drop a ton of cash on anti-aging potions and lotions and other treatments that promise to help us look as young as we feel, but did you know that your smile may be a dead giveaway of your real age?

It's true. Misshapen, discolored and uneven teeth can make you look older than your years. "I see it all the time," says [Kevin B. Sands, DDS](#), a cosmetic dentist in Beverly Hills, Calif. "Ladies come in with tight skin and teeth that are yellowed and discolored and really show their age."

But there is help available for your aging smile, he says.

How can you tell if you need a smile rejuvenation? You don't need to be a detective (or even a dentist) to spot the signs of an aging smile. They include:

Ageing Smile Clue No. 1: (Dis)Color

Teeth should be pearly white. But "as teeth age, they get darker," says [Larry Rosenthal, DDS](#), a dentist in New York City and founder of NYU's Rosenthal Institute. They can become yellowish or brown and really mar an otherwise flawless face. What we eat and drink—coffee, tea, soy sauce, for example, can cause discoloration and premature tooth aging.

Smile fixer uppers: Over-the-counter bleaching strips, in-office whitening, or at-home bleaching can be quick and inexpensive, but people who have less enamel—the white part that covers the tooth—have less surface to bleach. The alternative is veneers or thin shells that cover the front side of teeth. They can mask stains, fill gaps between teeth, and gloss over chips. Veneers are not cheap and average about \$2 grand per tooth, Rosenthal says.

Ageing Smile Clue No. 2: Frayed edges

This is a sign of tooth wear-and tear. "It is a huge clue," Sands says. "I see people with flat teeth all across their smile that have been grinded down over the years."

Smile fixer uppers: Some bonding or filing of the teeth can make a difference, he says. Veneers too have a role. "I basically fix the chips, gaps, discoloration, and wear pattern with veneers and create an age-appropriate smile," he says.

Ageing Smile Clue No. 3: Missing teeth

This is a sign of more than advancing age; it is also a sign of poor oral health.

Smile fixer uppers: Dentures can keep up appearances. Removable bridges can also help "bridge" the gap, but an implant can replace missing teeth permanently. "The results are amazing," Sands says.

Ageing Smile Clue No. 6: Thinning lips

As we age teeth can become thinner and shorter causing us to lose lip support.

Smile fixer uppers: "Building up teeth with cosmetic work can give a little more thickness and length to teeth," Sands says. The result is fuller looking lips and a decrease in the appearance of wrinkles. "Lip injections with soft tissue fillers can also offer some poof to our pouts."

Ageing Smile Clue No. 7: Gummy Smile

Our gums naturally shrink and recede with advancing age. This can leave teeth overexposed at the gum line—aka a gummy smile, Sands says.

Smile fixer upper: "To make the teeth look more attractive, gums must be in proportion," Sands says. "Re-contouring of the gums can make teeth appear longer and more even, thus younger looking."

Ageing Smile Clue No. 8: Crooked teeth

Crooked teeth are harder to keep clean, white, and young looking. "Cleaner teeth are whiter and brighter and go a long way toward smile rejuvenation," adds [Tammy Roz, DDS](#), a cosmetic dentist in Woodmere, NY.

Smile fixer upper: Go for regular cleanings. This can take years off of your smile," Roz says. Braces help too. "This is one of the reasons why braces are popular with adults." Invisalign as well as traditional rail road track braces can straighten teeth."

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