

Sweeten Up Your Gummy Smile!

Periodontist Dr. Joseph Zelig of Smile in the City Dental Group Transforms Less-Than-Perfect Gum Lines into Works of Art

New York, NY (January 22, 2008) – A smile is often a person's first form of expression as a baby and their calling card once they reach adulthood. So much emphasis is placed upon a perfect smile that patients often go to extreme measures to achieve pearly whites. Unfortunately, many cosmetic dental patients are often disappointed with their smile make overs once they realize their problem doesn't end with their teeth alone.

"A person's gums are what I like to call the frame of a perfect picture," says Dr. Joseph Zelig, a board-certified periodontist practicing in New York City, "you can spend thousands of dollars on veneers, caps and whitening, and never fully achieve the look you want without a proper gum line." Dr. Zelig has introduced a form of periodontal plastic surgery called The Gum Lift to his patients at Smile in the City Dental Group and they couldn't be happier. "Most people don't realize it, but healthy-looking gums contribute to the aesthetics of a person's smile just as much as straight and white teeth do."

The Gum Lift draws on the principals of periodontal surgery originally meant to restore gums that had been damaged by gingivitis. Dr. Zelig can both remove excess or uneven gums with a laser as well as use soft tissue grafts to build up areas where the gums may be receded.

Laser Gum Revision. When a person's gums are uneven or covering too much of their teeth they can give the appearance of a "gummy" smile, as seen on celebrities like Katie Couric and Kirsten Dunst. While it can be an appealing look for some, most people look to cosmetic dentists to refine their gum line through laser gum revision – a minimally-invasive procedure originally used to remove unhealthy gums damaged from gingivitis. "The gum revision procedure can create dramatic results without the extensive time, surgery, and money involved in other cosmetic procedures," says Dr. Zelig, "in many cases patients come in looking for full sets of veneers and only really need to have their gums refined."

Dr. Zelig uses a laser to reshape the gum line for a more even and proportional look. The procedure only requires a local anesthetic and usually results in minimal pain and downtime. For patients who are more nervous about their treatment, Dr. Zelig also offers the option of IV sedation for their treatment. Traditional gum revision surgery required the dentist to make incisions along the gum line and did not provide precise results. With laser gum revision Dr. Zelig is able to individually shape each tooth's gum frame to look natural and even.

Cosmetic Gum Grafts. On the flip side of a "gummy" smile, people whose teeth appear overly exposed or "horsey" (such as stars Gary Busey and Hilary Duff) can have receded gums or long teeth. For people with this type of condition, Dr. Zelig is able to perform a cosmetic gum graft by grafting healthy gum tissue on the roots and top portion of the teeth to give the look of a more proportionate smile.

"I take donor tissue from the palate or other areas and can artfully sculpt a new gum line with it," says Dr. Zelig, "the results not only give patients a more beautiful smile but can also be a remedy for some patients who suffer from extreme sensitivity to hot or cold due to receded gums." Gum grafts are also important factors in a person's overall health. According to Dr. Zelig, the gums are a first defense against harmful bacteria, trauma, and protect the entire mouth from bone and tooth loss.

Lip Repositioning. Some patients can suffer from gummy or horsey smiles along with the tendency to overexpose their gums when they smile. The most common cause of "over smiling" is upper lip hyper mobility, which means a patient overextends their lips when they smile. Dr. Zelig is able to separate the gum tissue from the upper lip and reattach the tissue to keep the lip at a normal level when the patient smiles. Lip repositioning is usually done with local anesthetic and the results can reshape a patient's face entirely.

Refining the Gum Line with Veneers. According to Dr. Nargiz Schmidt, Smile in the City's resident prosthodontist, many patients come to their Manhattan office looking for a complete smile makeover but neglect to think about their gums. "When I am planning out a smile makeover with a patient, it is important for me to explain to them the balance of the mouth," says Dr. Schmidt, "you can completely restore a person's smile with veneers but if you don't refine their gum line the work can look sloppy."

At Smile in the City Dental Group, Dr. Zelig and Dr. Schmidt work together to give their patients the most complete and appropriate smile make overs possible. Their practice focuses solely on cosmetic dentistry as a medical specialty – which means they have both an artistic eye for their work as well as extensive training – a feature that many general dentists overlook when offering cosmetic procedures.

About Dr. Joseph Zelig, D.D.S. Dr. Joseph Zelig, D.D.S. is a Board Certified Periodontist and is a Diplomate of the American Board of Periodontology. Dr. Zelig is a graduate of New York University College of Dentistry where he ranked among the top 10% of the graduating class. After completing dental school, Dr. Zelig continued his training at New York University for an additional three years post-graduate training in periodontics.

Dr. Zelig also holds a permit in intravenous conscious sedation from the New York State Board of Dentistry and is fully trained and qualified to perform I.V. Sedation. Dr. Zelig has given presentations at the Greater New York Dental Convention, the Northeastern Society of Periodontists, and the Metropolitan Periodontal Symposium. Dr. Zelig is a member of the American Academy of Periodontology, the Northeastern Society of Periodontists, and the International Congress of Oral Implantology.

About Dr. Nargiz Schmidt, D.D.S. Dr. Nargiz Schmidt, D.D.S. is a prosthodontist – a specialist in reconstructive, aesthetic and implant dentistry. Dr. Schmidt received her doctoral degree from SUNY at Stony Brook School of Dental Medicine with numerous awards for academic and clinical achievements in pharmacology, clinical dentistry, and biochemistry. After spending two years in private practice as a general dentist, Dr. Schmidt went on to become a specialist in cosmetic and reconstructive dentistry. She was accepted into the New York University College of Dentistry advanced education in prosthodontics.

Dr. Schmidt learned the art and science of prosthodontics and aesthetic dentistry from some of the best specialists in the country. Following the completion of this three-year, full-time program, Dr. Schmidt received certification as a Prosthodontist and is a member of the American College of Prosthodontics. As a prosthodontist, Dr. Schmidt is sensitively attuned to the aesthetic and functional concerns of her patients. She combines her scientific background with an artistic eye to bring the highest quality of personalized care to each of her patients.