

Sometimes Bigger Is Better

While cavities are often the first thing you think of when you consider the health of your teeth, they are not always the culprits. Sometimes teeth can just wear out. Revitalize them.

Leslie Adams had a bad bite. “It was causing me to grind my teeth and that was wearing them down,” confides Leslie. “However, I was hesitant to do anything about it.

“To begin with, as a child, visiting the dentist was a frightening and painful experience because I was always made to be the guinea pig for my brother and sister. I would have to go first to prove to them it didn’t hurt.

Stephen G. Blank, DDS

“It did.” “Additionally, my identical twin sister Ruthie has had a lot of difficulties with her teeth. Five years ago she was told she needed braces, which she wore for two years. Then her dentist told her that her bite could not be aligned unless they broke her jaw, so they did that and she had her mouth wired shut for a month. She also needed gum surgery.

“Watching Ruthie go through so much pain was difficult, and it made me think, ‘No one’s going to touch my teeth.’

But Leslie finally had to admit to herself that she needed dental work.

“Fortunately, during a conversation with one of my neighbors, he recommended that I see his dentist,” says Leslie. “He said he had received great service from Dr. Blank.”

Stephen G. Blank, DDS, practices cosmetic and functional dentistry in Port St. Lucie.

“I scheduled an appointment with him, and he put me at ease immediately,” observes Leslie. “Dr. Blank explained in detail what it would take to restore my bite and to make my teeth look new again. He was absolutely wonderful — very professional, knowledgeable, and most of all, very gentle. I was amazed. I’d never had an experience like that with a dentist before.

“I actually left looking forward to my future appointments.”

Smile design

“When Leslie first came to us, her first concerns were some broken teeth and the misalignment of her bite,” remembers Dr. Blank. “Once we performed her examination, we found that, because of the significant wear on her teeth, her mouth was over-closed, which means that when she closed her mouth, her chin was coming closer to her nose than was normal for her.”

Dr. Blank explains that the dynamics of worn teeth can be compared to that of candy M&M’s: “The enamel of

the tooth is like the hard candy shell on the outside of the chocolate. Just like the shell protects the creamy center that melts in your mouth but not in your hands, the enamel protects the softer center of the tooth known as the *dentin*. If the enamel becomes



worn down so that the dentin is exposed, then the rate of wear on the teeth

will increase faster and faster.” Dr. Blank also discovered that Leslie had a history of clenching her teeth. “That put her in jeopardy because, considering her teeth were already weakened from wear, her teeth could not tolerate the increased pressure,” describes the doctor.

Fortunately for Leslie, however, Dr. Blank further determined that she did not require orthodontics, as had her twin, and that her gums were perfectly healthy.

Treatment followthrough

“The first step we took for Leslie was to create a bite guard appliance for her in order to get her bite under control and

stop some of the self-destructive patterns,” observes Dr. Blank. “The bite guard is a removable plastic appliance that is custom fit to the patient’s mouth. It is not like the soft and rubbery sports guard that is made to prevent blunt trauma to the teeth. Instead, the rigid guard fits over the teeth snugly, allowing

the muscles to relax, the teeth to share the bite load more evenly, and the jaw to be positioned better for healing.” Dr. Blank points out that the guard can be worn any time there is no food between the teeth: “The damage does not occur at meal times. Instead, it can occur while the patient sleeps or at other times, depending on the individual patient. In Leslie’s case, she takes her fitness training very seriously and tends to clench her teeth, so it is important that she wear her guard during her workouts.”

Once Leslie’s bite was under control and her muscles had settled down, a diagnostic visit was scheduled so that Dr. Blank could measure her teeth, determining how much length had to be replaced and what had to be done to



FHCN PHOTO BY NERISSA JOHNSON

Leslie says she can’t say enough positive things about Dr. Blank.

restore her biting edges and chewing points to regain optimum function.

Mindful of his patients’ expectations, Dr. Blank chooses his cosmetic dentistry procedures and methods carefully. For Leslie, he recommended gaining tooth length by applying all-porcelain crowns. During her diagnostic visit, Dr. Blank designed the size, shape, color and position of the tooth restorations. Study models and photographs of her mouth were taken and sent to the laboratory for a wax-up.

A wax-up, or a wax model of how the enhanced or repaired teeth will look, is completed by the laboratory following Dr. Blank’s prescription. It simulates the new teeth and is used to make any necessary changes before the lab proceeds to make the patient’s new porcelain veneers or crowns.

“On our patient’s second visit, the teeth are prepared for the new restorations, and any old, obstructing dentistry is removed,” says Dr. Blank.

Impressions are made for the laboratory, and temporaries that match the wax-up are created.

“We then verified that Leslie’s bite was comfortable and healthy by using a digital computer T-scan,” explains Dr. Blank. “What we see on the monitor is comparable to what the dentist learns from the blue bite paper used to check a patient’s bite, except the T-scan measures in far more detail. It shows us both the timing and the intensity of the bite as well as its placement.

“The temporaries also give our patients the opportunity to see how their new smile will look. At this stage changes can be made, such as adding a bit of length or a little curvature or a slight reduction. We give the laboratory instructions on coloring, translucency, and brightness.” Digital images of the temporaries are sent to laboratory technician for better results.

Following their second visit, patients leave Dr. Blank’s office with resin temporaries.

“They looked just like Leslie’s new teeth were going to look,” adds Dr. Blank.

The final step for Leslie’s restorations was to bond the porcelain crowns to her teeth and again verify her bite with the digital T-scan.

“I’m so pleased with the way my teeth look,” volunteers Leslie. “I was so fortunate to find someone like Dr. Blank. He is wonderful.” **FHCN**—Kris Kline

For that healthy smile

Dr. Blank and his staff look forward to meeting the readers of Florida Health Care News. For more information or to schedule an appointment, please call (772) 878-7348. His office is located at 184 NW Central Park Plaza in Port St. Lucie.

Dr. Blank invites you to visit his website at www.PSLDENTIST.com.



Stephen G. Blank, DDS, is a graduate of Northwestern University Dental School in Chicago. He has since completed intensive continuing education studies, and he and his dental team have completed the Dental Organization for Conscious Sedation program. Dr. Blank has taught continuing education courses for dentists, dental assistants, and hygienists in conjunction with Indian River Community College’s Dental Science department, and he is a facilitator/mentor with the Dental Boot Kamp program and a supporter of the Smiles for Life Foundation. Dr. Blank enjoys teaching dental teams around the country.