

AESTHETICS

You can improve your looks by simply improving your teeth

smile! by Rhea Dum Dum

In an attempt to look fabulously young, women fuss over their skin and weight. Botox and fillers on the forehead, Aptos to lift sagging cheeks, liposuction all over—the list is endless. One thing they overlook, however, is probably the only thing that will make them look bright, friendly and worry-free—their smile.

Today, it is possible to improve your smile—and your looks—through cosmetic dentistry. “Lately, the number of patients coming to me for cosmetic procedures is almost equal to patients who come for dental procedures,” says Dr. Jennifer Co, DMD, who does aesthetics and advanced technology dentistry at the Rosero Dental Clinic.

“People are becoming more aware that you can improve your looks by improving your teeth,” she adds.

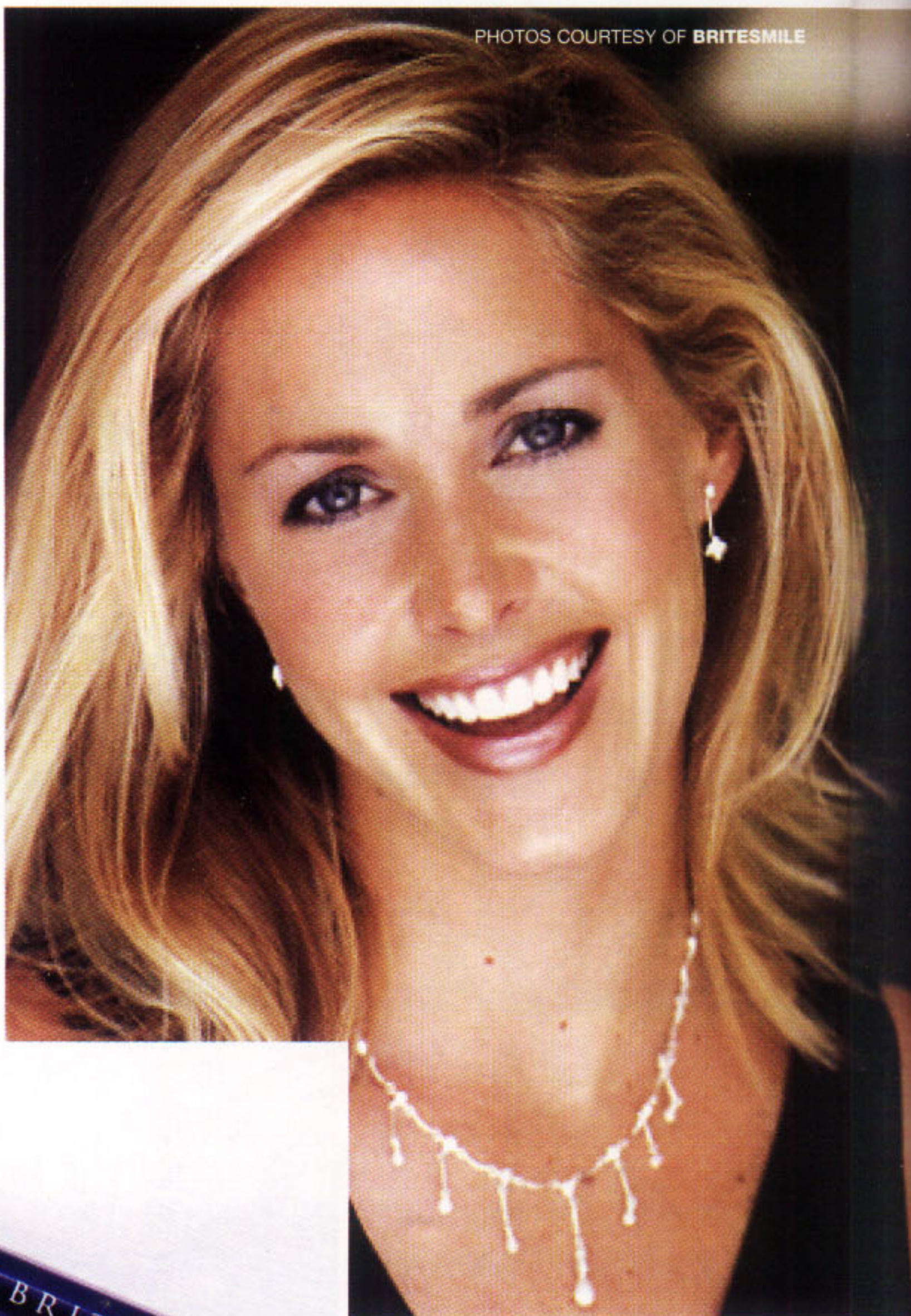
Like cosmetic surgery, these procedures don’t come cheap, but depending on your expectations, the final result is usually worth it.

Shine, Shine

One of the most popular cosmetic procedures for teeth is teeth-whitening or bleaching. Aging, smoking, genetics and tetracycline (an antibiotic which, if given to a child during development, causes discoloration) are major causes for discoloration. While over-the-counter whiteners are available, there are more powerful dentist-administered bleaches with a higher dosage of the main ingredient, peroxide solution.

There are two types to choose from: one-time laser treatments and gradual custom-made bleaching trays. In laser treatments, dentists prepare a carbamide peroxide solution, which is applied on

PHOTOS COURTESY OF BRITESMILE



Retouch your white teeth constantly after your laser treatments through the BriteSmile whitening pen

the teeth. Using a special machine, teeth are exposed to laser light for three cycles at 20 minutes each. After one hour, voila! Your teeth are eight to 15 times whiter than before.

There are several brands of laser whiteners and they cost approximately P20,000 or more, depending on the brand and solu-

tion used. One brand, BriteSmile, also offers a retouching pen (approximately P1000 per unit), which helps maintain the whiteness. This technology hasn’t been around for long to see full results, but some brands claim it lasts for three to four years.

With the second type, custom-made bleaching trays, Dr. Co has seen results lasting for more than five years. For approximately

P5000 less than laser treatments, the whitening process using bleaching trays is gradual. First, a dentist makes fitted trays with the shape of your teeth. For two to three weeks, you will fill the trays with solution (given by the dentist) and wear them overnight each night. Unlike the laser bleach, the tray bleach doesn't leave teeth sensitive after the treatment. Plus, you can control the brightness of your teeth, and use the same trays for touch-ups at a later time.

As a reminder, make sure you undergo complete oral rehabilitation before having your teeth whitened. Attend to cavities and cracked fillings. Whitening solution can penetrate teeth and make them sensitive. Keep teeth white by lessening stain-causing habits, like drinking tea and coffee or smoking.

We're Totally in Love with Caps

A shy boy from small town Altus, Arkansas once stole the heart of society princess Paris Hilton by flashing her a complete set of even and pearly white teeth. Though snagging a celebrity through smiling is not your desire, loss of teeth, a chipped tooth, damaged teeth due to tetracycline or unsightly spaces in between your teeth can dip your confidence. To improve the size and evenness of your teeth, have your dentist put laminate, bonding or crowns (popularly known as caps).

Full porcelain laminate (a minimum of P6000 per tooth) is usually used on damaged teeth, partially fractured teeth or teeth with spaces in between them. To do this, the dentist removes a very small portion of the teeth's front surface and places laminate ceram over the teeth in the desired size and shape.

Bonding is a relatively easy procedure, since it doesn't require lab work. Using a light-cured material similar to the one used for fillings, the dentist places the restorative material on the fractured part of the tooth and shapes it accordingly.

Crowns or caps can either be porcelain-fused-to-metal full-coverage crowns (PFM) or veneer crowns. With metal reinforcing the structure, PFM crowns are strong and best for bridges or when one has several teeth to cap. Without the same metal structure, veneer crowns (about P10,000 depending on material) work well on individual units and front teeth. The advantage of veneer crowns is that you cut less of the existing tooth as compared to PFM. Dr. Pio

Triponi DMD has a cult following because of the "miracles" he has performed using veneers. He measures the face of the patient and sculpts the teeth to fit in the most aesthetically pleasing way possible. Veneers come in three price points, with durability being the determining factor. Porcelain veneers is the most expensive and can last 10 to 15 years.

Another aesthetic problem some people have is their teeth are too small, so their gums are very prominent when they smile.

Dentists do a procedure called crown lengthening (about P6500 per tooth excluding additional procedures), wherein a portion of the gums is removed to show more of the teeth. However, if you have too much of a tooth showing, you can see an orthodontist to push it upward using braces.

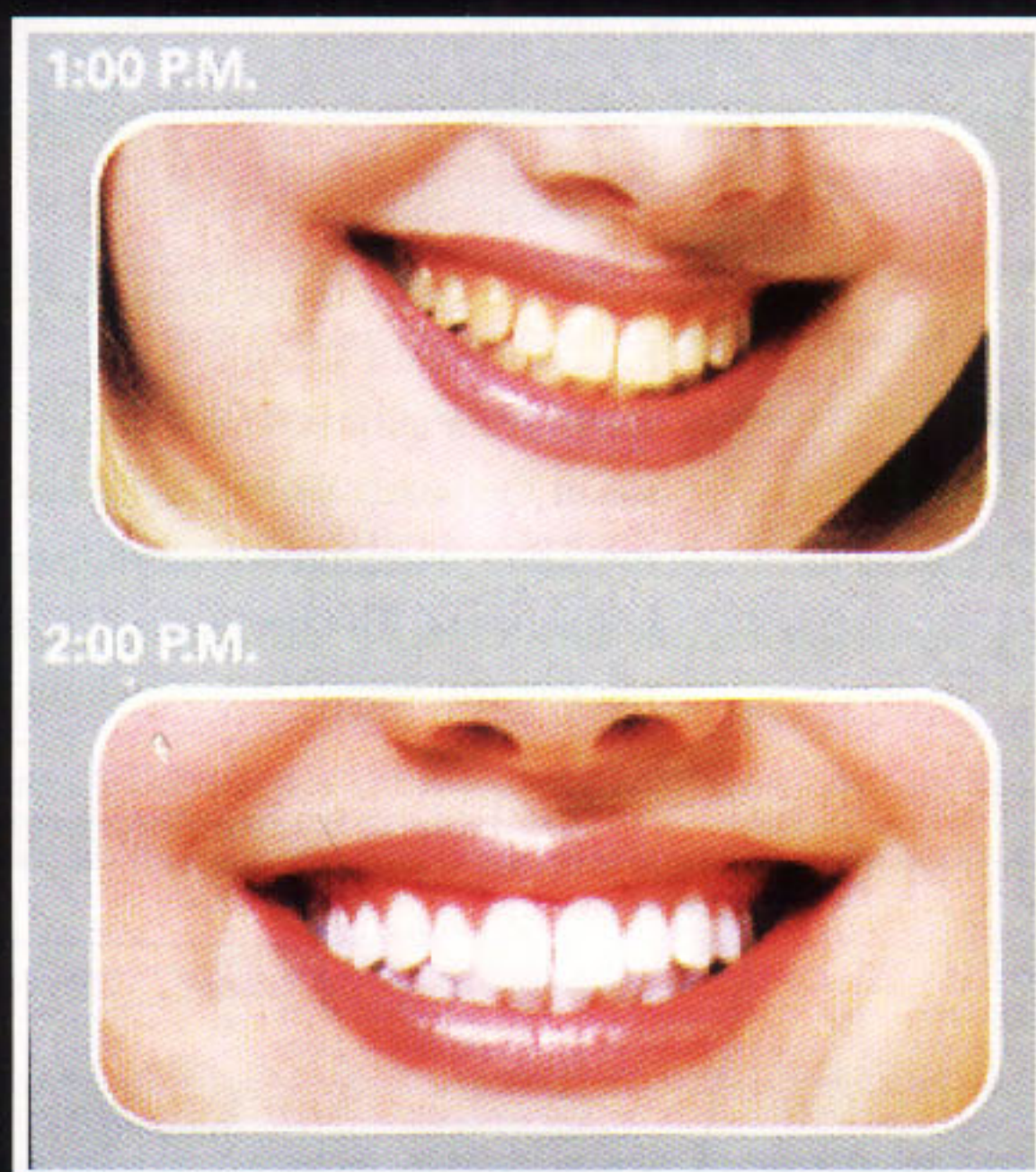
Laugh Lines Away

When you've had multiple tooth extractions, especially on your upper teeth, gums "shrink" because roots of the teeth are no longer there to add bulk. As a result, the upper lip sinks, the nasolabial fold (between the cheekbone and upper lip) becomes pronounced, and the face sags.

Dentures made with an added gum area can help supplement the lost bulk of gums. Some dentists also make gum pads for those who may not need the actual dentures. As a result, the upper lip gets a lift and the lines along the nasolabial folds are lessened. However, these pads can be an inconvenience because they are not self-cleaning and you have to remove and clean them separately every time.

These are only some procedures dentists can do. In fact, the

best thing to do is work closely with a dentist who can recommend a comprehensive plan using procedures available. At one point or another, you might have to go to an orthodontist and a TMJ expert. The whole process may take a while, but be patient. After all, each step is an essential part of improving your best asset: your smile. ■



actual results may vary

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Rosero Dental Clinic is located at the Second Floor, Rose Building, 72 West Avenue, Quezon City, phone (2) 372 7863, 371 5787 or 371 5798. Triponi Dental Clinic is located at the Second Floor, Tesoro Building, Arnaiz Avenue, Makati City, phone (917) 890 3114.