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Ask The Expert: Toothless Smile

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Q: When I smile, you can't see any of my teeth. Are there any options to improve this?

A: The options depend on the reason why the teeth are not visible. For instance, teeth could be short and hidden behind the upper lip as a result of tooth grinding, or the upper jaw may be up high allowing the upper lip to cover the upper teeth, or the upper lip may not rise very high when smiling.

Treatment options include:

1. If the teeth are short because of tooth grinding, which commonly occurs at night during sleep, the options are limited. Porcelain veneers or porcelain crowns (\$800 to \$1,500 per veneer depending on the dentist) are the only viable choice to lengthen the teeth. Bonding or composite resin to lengthen teeth is too weak to ensure lasting results. If grinding is the cause, treatment should include a night guard (\$400 - \$2,000 depending whether it is orthopedic or not) to protect the dental work.
2. Orthodontics (\$6000 +) may be helpful to extrude or erupt the upper teeth beyond the bottom of the upper lip. This may be helpful whether the upper teeth are short or not. Crowns or veneers may be placed following.
3. In another scenario, the upper jaw along with the teeth can be lowered as one whole piece (lips remain in their position) through a fairly involved surgery by a Maxillofacial surgeon. This can accompany the treatments mentioned above.
4. A last treatment option, which can stand alone or in combination with any of the above, may involve a face lift or a variation of. A plastic surgeon would need to be consulted for this treatment option.



-Dr. Brian S. Friedman, DDS, <http://www.drbrianfriedman.ca>.

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