

PEG LATERALS

At times, for several reasons, the maxillary lateral incisors do not form properly. Maxillary lateral incisors are the smaller teeth on either side of the top two teeth. This malformation of the tooth is genetically determined. The malformation can take on several different appearances, and both teeth or only one of the teeth may be affected. The teeth can be shorter in height or lesser in width or a combination of the two. This type of deviation from the normal shape of the tooth is called a *peg lateral incisor*. The solution to this cosmetic problem can be simple or complicated, depending on what shape the tooth has when it is diagnosed and treatment has begun.

Restorative Possibilities

If the peg tooth (or teeth) is just slightly more narrow than normal and there is a space available on either side or both sides of it, the tooth can be bonded with a directly placed composite restoration. This is the most common treatment. The results are very positive and can last a long time. An excellent color match is not difficult to obtain. The procedure is similar to closing a diastema (a naturally occurring space between teeth).

If there is not enough space on either side to place the composite material, orthodontics might be required to provide room for the bonding. Diagnosed early, this is not a problem to do. If the patient waits until adulthood for the orthodontics, shifting of the teeth may have forced the peg tooth out of line, and more extensive orthodontics may be needed.

If the peg tooth is too small in both height and width and there is adequate space remaining, the tooth can still be rebuilt with a composite. However, if the patient is older and there is a significant amount of tooth to be replaced, a porcelain restoration may be more appropriate. This restoration is made in a laboratory with excellent esthetic results. It will last a very long time. It is more expensive to accomplish and will not be placed until the mouth is fully developed and the teeth and gum tissue are in their "adult" position – sometime after age 18.

In brief, restoration of a peg lateral can be done with composite resin (in all ages) or porcelain (after age 18). Size and position of the teeth will determine what is done and when. As soon as it is noted, plans should be made for eventual restoration. It is important to make sure there is sufficient space for the proper length and width bonding. This spacing may happen naturally or need orthodontic assistance.

If you have any questions about peg laterals and their restorations, please feel free to ask us.