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Removal of Superficial Spots on Teeth

There are many reasons for superficial white, brown, gray or orange spots that appear on tooth surfaces. In some case, heredity is the cause. Cigarettes, coffee, and tea also can cause superficial spots. Tetracycline has been shown to cause stains that range in color from yellow to orange to brown to blue-gray. (Tetracycline ingested between the ages of four months prior to birth to nine months after birth can often affect primary teeth – and, if taken during the first nine years of life, can affect permanent teeth with superficial spotting.)

Regardless of their origin, these spots are objectionable (unsightly), and may be removed in one or more of the following ways:

Microabrasion: For removal of a small amount of the discolored tooth structure an abrasive solution is the most conservative method used. This method, microabrasion, which is painless (requiring no anesthetics), is usually very fast, relatively inexpensive, and produces a permanent result. We will advise you if this procedure is appropriate for the superficial spots on your teeth.

Restorations: Spots or discolorations which go deeper may be eliminated through small restorations.

Veneers/Bonding: If there are multiple or very deep discolorations, thin custom-made pieces of plastic or porcelain called veneers can be bonded to the surfaces of the teeth to cover the spots. Veneers provide an excellent appearance and have a longevity of several years.

WE recommend beginning with conservative microabrasion if possible. If this is successful, additional treatment is not necessary. When the spots are too deep, small restorations may be needed; if the spots or discolorations are very deep, veneers will be recommended at the outset.

NOTE: Smoking, coffee, and tea stains are usually superficial and will be removed by the hygienist at your routine cleaning.