

Problem Solvers 28 Deviant Dentistry Part 2

Synonyms: Grilles, Grill, Vampire teeth, Tooth jewelry, custom crowns, fronts, golds, grillz. Custom scary mouthguards.

In today's society, many younger people are seeking to express themselves artistically. They do this through the use of body art, piercings, and alterations of their anatomy, permanent make-up, tattoos and mouth jewelry or "grilles." This article will further explore what people are doing to their teeth, the pros and cons of such treatment and answering popular questions concerning permanent dental changes to your teeth.

My son came home and asked for money for a "grille" that has gold and diamond studded teeth. Are these safe and who should make them?

First of all it should be qualified that the only professional that is licensed to make alterations to teeth or to fabricate dental prostheses are dentists. Many Jewelry stores are trying to cash in on making dental "bling" appliances called "grilles" and they have no training in proper biting or occlusion. Furthermore, they do not have autoclaves, or a health care system in place to insure proper sterilization to prevent cross contamination. Simply put, if they are taking impressions of the mouth, they are performing dentistry without a license and may be breaking the law.

The trend toward wearing these platinum and diamond encrusted snap on teeth was started by rappers such as Paul Wall, and Nelly. In my practice, I have personally seen dozens of trauma cases that are a result of wearing grilles. The use of grilles is not just about the wealth that they represent but the money that was "earned" according to some rappers that wear these devices.

What are the problems with wearing a "grille"?

- When you put something in the mouth over your teeth you have changed your bite. The metal grille is going to hit hard and the natural teeth will not hit at all. The trauma of biting on metal will chip or crack your teeth.
- People that have these cemented on their teeth can not clean under them. This leads to cavities, which can ravage the teeth under the grille. I have had several patients that have no teeth left under their grill due to decay that has eaten away the entire tooth. Usually these people are also drinking a lot of sugary soda.
- Periodontal disease. If these teeth are not made by a dentist, and are cemented or left on for prolonged periods of time they will catch bacteria. These bacteria when left in contact with food or sugar over time cause severe gum disease. Patients that have these made must be instructed to remove

them and only wear them for short periods of time. As well, they must brush the natural teeth, floss them and use fluoride supplements.

- Biting on metal can not only break opposing teeth but it can break the teeth under the grill.
- When grills are custom made, they require shaving down teeth. This is an irreversible procedure and can only be performed by a dentist. Shaving down of healthy teeth can result in the nerve dying requiring a root canal or can result in sensitivity if the enamel is removed.
- If grills are made of gold or a noble metal, there is little risk of an allergic reaction, however, if the grill is made of nickel or non-noble metals allergies can result that can cause redness or anaphylactic shock.
- If any appliance is worn for prolonged periods of time it can change your bite. This can lead to movement of the natural teeth. So if a grill is left in place full time, it separates the back teeth. Over time the back teeth can super erupt and touch each other again. This will result in a space when the grill is eventually removed. To correct this it will require braces and tremendous expense.

What should be done to protect my child's teeth if they wear a grill?

Instruct them to see the dentist for proper instruction and to monitor the health of the underlying teeth.

Have them remove them for all meals.

Tell your child to brush, floss and use fluoride for the underlying teeth every day.

Have them use a mouthwash such as Listerine to kill the bacteria twice daily for 30 seconds.

Maintain three -month dental check-ups and cleanings and request a professional fluoride treatment and fluoride varnish at each check up.

Make sure that under no circumstance is the grill ever cemented on! This can lead to severe dental problems; which include cavities, fracture, periodontal disease and orthodontic changes.

What are Vampire teeth?

The plethora of Vampire movies, like Twilight, has prompted many people to change the appearance of their teeth. Dentists can make temporary "fangs" for parties or Halloween but they should be removed promptly to avoid any damage to the underlying tooth.

How are they made?

The dentist can take an impression and have their laboratory make party teeth with some very sophisticated tinting such as blood or age lines! There are some kits that can be purchased at party stores or online. Just as with grills, they should be removed so that they don't cause chips or cracks to the opposing teeth.

Some people come to the dental office and want the dentist to perform grinding on a perfectly healthy tooth to make it take on the shape of a Vampire's tooth.

No dentist should make any irreversible changes to an otherwise healthy tooth. This violates our Hippocratic oath to "do no harm." No matter how sophisticated our dental materials are today, there is no substitute for the enamel on your teeth.

ARTWORK ON CROWNS

What is the strangest request you have had for customizing crowns?

I have made a Harley Davidson Motorcycle on a porcelain crown, placed diamonds in gold crowns, made crowns with patients' initials and even made some dental bridges with elephants in a row with trunks holding on to the tail of the elephant in front of them! The one thing to keep in mind is that each of these teeth NEEDED a crown. Crowns are made when the underlying tooth is fractured, has had a root canal or has fillings that comprise greater than 50% of the tooth. So if you want something personalized and the tooth requires a crown, ask your dentist to help you create the "look" you desire. Beauty is in the eye of the beholder.

My Grandma has gold teeth, how is this possible when she wears dentures?

Plastic denture teeth can be customized in the same way as natural teeth. You can either purchase teeth that have the gold applied or they can be customized in the dental laboratory. Pre-made gold teeth can be adorned with crosses; dollar signs, stars, moons, lettering and they come in multiple shapes and sizes.

ARTWORK ON MOUTHGUARDS

When people want to achieve a scary appearance they can also make some very scary mouthguards. They can have dripping blood, flames, words or the appearance of "ugly" teeth embedded within the EVA or plastic mouthguard material. The type of mouthguard will depend on the sport or contact anticipated and is covered in a different problem solver topic.

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