

Aesthetic Gum Lift & Crown Lengthening

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Aesthetic Gum Lift & Crown Lengthening

The gumline is the frame of your smile. Even teeth that are well-shaped and correctly coloured can appear short, uneven, or disproportionate if the gum margin sits too low, too high, or unevenly across the front teeth. A gum lift — clinically known as crown lengthening — raises and reshapes the gumline to reveal more of the natural tooth structure, producing a more balanced, proportionate smile.

At Collins Street Specialist Centre, aesthetic gum lifting and crown lengthening are performed by our specialist periodontists using state-of-the-art laser technology. For patients requiring both periodontal contouring and porcelain restorations — veneers, crowns, or a full smile rehabilitation — our periodontists work in close collaboration with the CSSC prosthodontics team to plan the ideal outcome before a single procedure begins.

What Is a Gum Lift / Crown Lengthening?

Crown lengthening is a surgical procedure that repositions the gum margin (and, where necessary, the underlying bone) to expose more of the tooth's anatomical crown. It is used both for aesthetic purposes — improving the appearance of a "gummy smile" or uneven gumline — and for functional clinical reasons, such as providing adequate tooth structure for a crown preparation.

****Aesthetic gum lift:**** Performed on the front six to eight upper teeth (and sometimes the lower anteriors), an aesthetic gum lift reshapes and raises the gum margin to correct excess gum display, improve gumline symmetry, or create more harmonious tooth proportions. Many patients pursue this procedure in conjunction with porcelain veneers or composite bonding to comprehensively reshape their smile. The gum contour is the canvas; the restorations are the final layer.

****Functional crown lengthening:**** When a tooth is broken down below the gumline — by decay, fracture, or a failed previous restoration — there may be insufficient tooth structure above the gum for a crown to reliably grip. Crown lengthening exposes more tooth structure, creating the biological width

and retention the crown requires. This is both a periodontal and restorative procedure, planned jointly with the treating prosthodontist.

****Correcting "gummy smile" (excessive gingival display):**** Some patients show an excessive amount of gum when smiling. This may result from altered passive eruption (the gum has not receded to its ideal position as teeth erupted), short clinical crowns, a vertical maxillary excess (bone-related), or a hyperactive upper lip. A periodontist assesses the cause and determines whether gum lifting alone will achieve the desired result, or whether orthodontic or surgical input is also required.

When Might You Need a Gum Lift?

A gum lift or crown lengthening may be the appropriate next step if you:

- Show excessive gum when smiling and feel this detracts from your appearance
- Have an uneven or asymmetrical gumline across the upper (or lower) front teeth
- Have teeth that appear short or "squat" due to a low gum margin
- Have been told by a prosthodontist that you require crown lengthening before a crown can be placed
- Are planning a full smile makeover with veneers or crowns and want to optimise the gum architecture first
- Have a single tooth that appears shorter than its neighbours due to altered passive eruption

A thorough evaluation is essential before planning any aesthetic gum procedure. A periodontist will examine the biological width (the distance from the base of the gum crevice to the bone crest), the bone levels, and the relationship between the gum margin and the cemento-enamel junction of each tooth. This assessment determines whether the procedure is limited to soft tissue only, or whether bone reshaping is also required for a stable, predictable long-term result.

What to Expect: The Gum Lift Process

Pre-Treatment Planning

For aesthetic cases, treatment planning typically involves collaboration between the periodontist and prosthodontist. A diagnostic wax-up may be fabricated — a model of the proposed final tooth shape that, together with gumline photographs and digital smile design planning, allows the ideal gum position to be determined. This "work backwards from the final smile" approach ensures the gum lift is designed around the restorative outcome, rather than the other way around.

For functional crown lengthening, your periodontist coordinates with your prosthodontist to confirm the minimum amount of tooth structure required for a crown preparation and plan the procedure accordingly.

Laser Gum Lifting (Soft Tissue Procedure)

When bone is not involved — as is often the case for mild-to-moderate altered passive eruption or asymmetry correction — the procedure can be performed using laser technology alone. At CSSC, the Fotona LightWalker laser, NV Laser, and VersaWave laser allow precise, minimally invasive reshaping of the gum margin with excellent haemostasis (bleeding control), sterilisation of the tissue margin, and accelerated healing compared with conventional scalpel techniques.

Dr James van den Berg has been performing laser periodontal procedures since 2004 and is one of the most experienced laser periodontists in Victoria. For straightforward aesthetic gum lifts affecting the front six teeth, laser treatment under local anaesthesia is well-tolerated and requires minimal downtime.

A laser gum lift procedure typically takes 30–60 minutes. For patients who need only soft tissue recontouring, this can often be completed in a single appointment.

Surgical Crown Lengthening (With Bone Recontouring)

When biological width needs to be re-established or when the bone crest needs to be lowered to achieve a stable, healthy result, surgical crown lengthening is required. This involves:

1. Local anaesthesia (IV sedation available if preferred)
2. A sulcular incision to reflect the gum tissue from the underlying bone
3. Reshaping of the alveolar bone crest using hand instruments and ultrasonic tips to achieve the required crown-to-bone distance
4. Repositioning and suturing of the gum margin at the new, more apical level
5. Sometimes, laser assistance for final margin refinement

Surgical crown lengthening takes approximately 60–90 minutes for the anterior sextant. Recovery is more involved than a laser-only procedure, and a healing period of 6–12 weeks is typically required before definitive restorations are placed — the gum margin needs to stabilise fully before the prosthodontist can take accurate impressions.

Timing of Restorations

A common patient question is: do I get my veneers or crowns before or after the gum lift? The answer is almost always *after*. Placing restorations before the gum has healed and stabilised risks placing margins in the wrong position. The gum lift is the first step; prosthodontic restoration follows once healing is confirmed.

Recovery and Aftercare

Recovery after a laser gum lift is typically mild: - Some tenderness at the treated sites for 1–3 days - Minor swelling resolving within a few days - Over-the-counter analgesia (ibuprofen, paracetamol) is usually adequate

Recovery after surgical crown lengthening is more involved: - Swelling and some discomfort for 3–7 days - Prescription analgesia for the first 48 hours - Soft diet for 1–2 weeks - Chlorhexidine mouth rinse for 2–4 weeks - Suture removal at 1–2 weeks - Provisional restorations (if crowns or veneers are planned) can often be placed shortly after surgery, with definitive restorations at 6–12 weeks

Your periodontist will provide detailed written aftercare instructions specific to your procedure.

Why See a Specialist Periodontist for a Gum Lift?

Aesthetic gum contouring has become more widely offered across the dental profession, but the skill differential between a specialist periodontist and a general practitioner is significant — particularly when the procedure requires bone recontouring, or when it must integrate with a complex restorative plan.

Key advantages of specialist care for gum lifting:

- **Biological width expertise:** Correctly accounting for the biological width is essential for long-term stability. Placing restorations too close to the bone crest — which occurs if crown lengthening is inadequate — leads to chronic inflammation, recession, and restoration failure.
- **Laser precision:** Not all practices offering laser gum lifts have the technology or training to deliver consistent, predictable outcomes. Our team's dedicated laser systems and long-standing laser experience provide quantifiably better soft tissue results.
- **Restorative integration:** Specialist periodontists understand the prosthetic requirements for crowns and veneers. At CSSC, the periodontic and prosthodontic teams share the same building and collaborate on case planning routinely.

All CSSC periodontists are Dental Board-registered specialists. AHPRA registration can be verified at the AHPRA website.

Our Specialists

Aesthetic gum lifting and crown lengthening at CSSC is performed by our periodontics team on Level 12 & Tower, Manchester Unity Building:

- **Dr Simon Hinckfuss** — Specialist Periodontist and Specialist Prosthodontist. The only clinician in Australia with dual registration in both specialties. Uniquely able to plan and, where appropriate, manage both the periodontal and prosthetic phases of aesthetic smile treatment. - **Dr James van den Berg** — Specialist Periodontist, Victoria's most experienced laser periodontist, with laser-assisted gum lifting and crown lengthening experience since 2004. - **Dr Nupur Kataria** — Specialist Periodontist trained in the full range of aesthetic and functional crown lengthening procedures. - **Dr Ahmed El Hadidi** — Specialist Periodontist performing aesthetic crown lengthening and recession procedures, with particular attention to evidence-based aesthetic planning. - **Dr Peishan Jiang** — Specialist Periodontist experienced in crown lengthening as part of comprehensive periodontal and implant treatment.

Related Treatments

- **[Gum Grafting](/periodontics/gum-grafting/)** — When the gum needs to be *added* rather than *lifted*, gum grafting addresses recession and thin tissue. - **[Gum Disease Treatment](/periodontics/gum-disease/)** — Active periodontal disease must be treated before any aesthetic gum procedure. - **[Porcelain Veneers (Prosthodontics)](/prosthodontics/veneers/)** — Often planned in combination with a gum lift for comprehensive smile redesign. - **[Dental Crowns (Prosthodontics)](/prosthodontics/dental-crowns/)** — Functional crown lengthening creates the tooth structure required for reliable crown retention. - **[Full Mouth Rehabilitation (Prosthodontics)](/prosthodontics/full-mouth-rehabilitation/)** — Major restorative cases frequently include aesthetic gum contouring as a preparatory step.