

# The gentle touch: Bringing glycine air polishing to cosmetic dentistry

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In cosmetic and restorative dentistry, the smallest details make the biggest difference—the texture of a surface, the contour of a restoration, the health of the surrounding tissues. Over time, I've realized that maintaining those details requires the same care and attention as creating them. One of the most effective ways I've found to do that is with therapeutic air polishing using glycine powder.

For many years, my team relied on hand instruments and traditional air polishers to remove biofilm and stain. Those methods did the job, but they had limits. Traditional air polishing, in particular, can be harsh. You can't use it on porcelain, composite, or even enamel without risking abrasion. There are always areas around brackets, implants, and interproximal spaces that are difficult to reach thoroughly.

Therapeutic air polishing works differently. Instead of scraping away buildup mechanically, it gently disrupts the biofilm. The glycine powder we use is fine and soft, but it's extremely effective. It reaches into places where traditional tools can't, while being safe on restorations and comfortable for the patient. The first time I tried it, I noticed right away how much smoother and cleaner the process felt—for both me and the patient.

In my practice, we use the PWR Pair system, which combines piezo scaling with air polishing. It allows us to move seamlessly between removing calculus and polishing, saving time and creating a much more pleasant experience overall. It's particularly helpful for certain patients, such as those with

implants, appliances, or anyone prone to inflammation or buildup in hard-to-reach spots. Teenagers in braces, for example, often tell us how much more comfortable it feels compared to traditional polishing.

Despite being gentle, glycine is surprisingly good at removing surface stains. Coffee, tea, and tobacco stains come off easily, leaving teeth noticeably brighter. Some of my longtime patients have told me it's the cleanest their teeth have ever felt, which says a lot when you've been seeing someone for two decades.

From a cosmetic standpoint, I've found it useful before and after restorative procedures. Before treatment, it helps reduce inflammation and ensures the teeth are clean and smooth. Afterward, it's ideal for removing residual cement or polishing around new work. It's also excellent for long-term maintenance. Patients have invested a

great deal of time and money, and I want those surfaces to stay beautiful for as long as possible. That's why I always remind my cosmetic patients to avoid abrasive prophylactic pastes. If their general dentist uses a glycine air polisher, I can confidently say their restorations are in good hands.

For me, the therapeutic and aesthetic goals are never separate. Glycine polishing supports both goals without compromise—it cleans effectively while preserving what we've worked so hard to create.

I believe this approach represents where dentistry is headed. Patients are more aware than ever of what's being used in their care, and many want methods that are less abrasive and more biologically friendly. As clinicians, when we have a tool that allows us to clean more effectively while being gentler on enamel, restorations, and tissue, that's the direction we should take.

When you know better, you do better. For me, that means using materials and techniques that protect both the health and beauty of my patients' smiles. Therapeutic air polishing fits perfectly into that philosophy—it's simple, comfortable, and kind to every surface we touch. **DE**



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