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TOOTH WHITENING

What is tooth whitening?

Tooth whitening can be a very effective way of lightening the natural colour of your teeth without removing any of the tooth surface. It cannot make a complete colour change, but it may lighten the existing shade.

What does tooth whitening involve?

Professional bleaching is the most usual method of tooth whitening. Your dental team will be able to tell you if you are suitable for the treatment, and will supervise it if you are. First the dental team will take impressions (moulds) of your teeth which are then sent to a specialist registered laboratory. Custom made bespoke vacuum formed gel trays are then provided which you will fill with a carbamide peroxide gel. This active ingredient gets broken down by oxygen when it gets into the enamel and the colour of the teeth made lighter.

How long should I wear the trays for?

This depends on the amount of lightening that you desire and the original shade of the teeth. If your teeth are quite dark or very yellow/ grey/ tetracycline stained it will take longer to bleach the teeth. If you are not experiencing any sensitivity you may wear the trays for at least one to two hours - you can even sleep with the trays in your mouth. It is very important to remove all the excess material around the gums or the palate prior to sleeping with the trays. The darker your teeth, the longer your teeth will take to get lighter. Tetracycline stained teeth can take six months or up to one year to bleach. Some teeth can whiten after one month. If you cannot wear the trays for a day because of your schedule, it does not matter. Bleach your teeth according to your schedule. Some people put the trays in after dinner and wear them for the first hour while watching TV etc then, if everything is fine, replenish the trays and sleep with them in the mouth.

What do I do if I have any sensitivity?

Sensitivity of teeth is the most common side effect of home bleaching. In fact many patients suffer from sensitive teeth any way. This occurs usually around the necks of the teeth where the gums have receded. If you are experiencing any sensitivity you should stop bleaching your teeth for a few days. You can resume after about 2 to 3 days. If the teeth become ultra sensitive you can place the provided toothpaste in the bleaching tray for an hour a day. That will usually stop the sensitivity. Alternatively you can rub the desensitising toothpaste into the gum margins with your finger 5 times per day for a few days. If you are at all concerned, please call your dentist.

What happens if the teeth do not bleach evenly?

If the teeth have white spots on them before bleaching, these spots will appear whiter during the first few days. The contrast between the spots and the rest of the tooth will lessen and eventually the spots will not be noticeable. Sometimes the dentist can do a special procedure called microabrasion for you to permanently remove the white spots. Ask your dentist about the procedure if you are concerned about this.



You may notice new white spots occurring on the teeth while you are undertaking the bleaching treatment. These white spots were already present on the teeth before bleaching. As the teeth become lighter they become more visible. Do not worry. As the whole tooth itself becomes lighter these spots will fade. You may notice these white spots immediately after a bleaching session or in the morning if you have been wearing the trays for the whole night. Some teeth may appear banded with lighter/ whiter areas. Any banding that becomes visible will have been present previously but may not have been noticeable on darker teeth. As the tooth becomes lighter, the lighter parts of the tooth will lighten first followed by the darker banded area. After a week or so these will not be noticeable any more.

How will my teeth feel?

Normally the teeth feel very clean after the bleaching procedure due to the amount of oxygen inside the teeth. The bleaching materials also have an indirect effect on the gums in helping them to heal or improving the health of the gums. This is how the technique was invented as it was first used to heal gum irritation during orthodontic treatment.

What about my smile?

Your smile will appear brighter as a bonus. It is very rare, but sometimes the teeth do not lighten at all. If this happens and you are wearing the bleaching trays as recommended, you may need to try a different bleaching product or a slightly higher concentration of the bleaching material. The dentist can do a few “power bleaching sessions” for you while you relax in the chair. Discuss this with your dentist. If you have white fillings in the front teeth that match the existing shade of your teeth before you bleach your teeth, they may not match the teeth afterwards. This is because your teeth can lighten, but the fillings do not lighten. When the desired colour has been achieved, the dentist can replace these fillings with a lighter shade of filling material to match the new shade of your teeth. Normally the dentist will wait a week before changing the fillings.

How long does the bleaching last? Will I have to bleach my teeth again?

Normally the new white colour of your teeth keeps quite well. However, if you drink a lot of coffee, red wine, or cola the teeth may darken slightly. Some patients do a top up treatment after three to four years. The top up interval varies between each patient.

Does bleaching harm the teeth or gums?

Safety studies have shown that bleaching teeth using the dentist-prescribed homebleaching technique is perfectly safe on the teeth and oral tissues. Bleaching the teeth with the dentist-prescribed kits is equivalent to drinking one soda drink. The bleaching material has a neutral ph.

The technique of bleaching teeth is not for everybody. There are some situations where bleaching teeth is contraindicated such as where the front teeth are already crowned or where there are very large fillings on the front teeth or where the teeth are already

excessively worn and there is tooth surface loss. The most ideal situation is where there is not much wrong with the teeth except for the colour that has become more yellow with age.

OVER THE COUNTER PRODUCTS

There used to be problems with the bleaching kits that are purchased over the counter. Although they are inexpensive, some contained an acid rinse, which can damage the teeth or thin down the enamel of the teeth. This acid rinse can be extremely harmful to the teeth. There was a case where a patient purchased the kit over the counter, bleached the teeth. The teeth went darker and the patient continued over using the treatment. This was because the acid rinse had worn the enamel away and the darker shade was the dentine that was exposed. It is not, however, advisable to bleach your teeth if you smoke. It is best to stop smoking for at least three weeks before commencing the bleaching procedure. Smoking causes the teeth to darker anyway and the effects will be diminished.

Home Whitening Patient Instructions

Before bed:

1. Just before sleep, take 2 Ibuprofen tablets (provided you are not allergic or Ibuprofen is unsuitable for you. Ask your GP if unsure). If you are in the habit of reading or watching television before you sleep then do not start the trays until you are ready to sleep
2. Brush your teeth thoroughly for two minutes with normal toothpaste.
3. Prepare your tray by placing a little whitening gel into each of the reservoirs.
4. Place the tray in the mouth and ensure that it is well seated.
5. Remove excess bleaching material with a cotton wool roll or tissue.
6. Do not swallow any excess material.
7. Dab the teeth dry on the front and back with a tissue, if necessary.

On waking:

1. Take the trays out and rinse the mouth with water.
2. Brush with normal toothpaste.
3. Clean the trays in cool water.
4. Leave in open box to air during the day.
5. Ensure that the trays don't distort. Store them carefully.



Sensitivity Management During Home Bleaching

Sensitivity of teeth is the most common side effect of whitening treatment. This usually occurs around the necks of the teeth. Patients can experience some degree of sensitivity, which ranges from mild awareness to a throb on a specific tooth. Up to 80% of patients suffer with some sensitivity. If you are experiencing sensitivity during your whitening treatment these are the different treatments that you should follow.

1. We will provide you with a de-sensitising material to place in your bleaching trays. This should be placed in the trays in exactly the same way that the bleaching material is placed. You should alternate each night, one night with the desensitising material and the following night with the bleaching material, or you can place it onto the tray for one hour per night. This should be continued until the sensitivity disappears.
2. We will also provide you with desensitising trays. You should wear these for one night only to relieve sensitivity.
3. We will provide you with [Duraphat toothpaste 2800ppm]. This can either be put in your bleaching trays or it can be rubbed onto an individual tooth where it is sensitive.
4. You can also brush with the de-sensitising toothpaste during the whitening treatment. Alternatively, place a small amount of the tooth paste onto your finger and rub into the sensitive area. This should be continued each night until the sensitivity disappears.
5. You can stop the whitening for one night if the sensitivity is too severe. Do not stop for more than two nights otherwise the effect of the whitening will slow down. Sometimes the gums may also feel a little sensitive. If you notice the gums are feeling sore, you need to refrain from bleaching for one day or reduce the concentration of the whitening gel.

Menu of Tooth-Whitening options

Home Whitening (£300)

Custom made trays specially designed for the deep whitening systems to give the maximum possible whitening available in home kits. The trays are designed with the most advanced technology available today to deliver a deeper whitening than all other home kits.

Includes One set of custom made trays,
Adequate gel for 3 weeks application,
De-sensitising toothpaste,
Storage case for the trays.