

tooth whitening

Are there any side effects?

The techniques of tooth whitening have been extensively researched and it has been found that a typical course of treatment has the same effect on the teeth as drinking one glass of cola, however there have been no studies that investigate the long-term use of these products. Sensitivity during treatment or for a few days after is the most frequently reported side effect. If this happens it usually disappears of its own accord soon after the treatment has stopped, and can be eased by using a sensitive toothpaste or a fluoride mouthwash.

How long does tooth whitening last?

Tooth whitening lasts from one to three years or longer depending upon the initial cause of discolouration and external factors such as smoking and diet. Patients usually request a top up after about 18 months. Note, that the teeth may be slightly lighter than the achieved shade, immediately after the treatment .

Are over-the-counter whitening kits as effective?

Tooth whitening is a complex procedure that should be carried out under the supervision of a dentist after a thorough examination and assessment of your teeth. To ensure the best result it is important to follow your dentist's instructions carefully. Some over-the-counter kits can damage your teeth as they may contain acids or could be abrasive.

How do I care for my teeth once they have been whitened?

To prolong the effect you should use whitening toothpaste, a good electric toothbrush and minimise the consumption of staining foods and tobacco. Regular check-ups with your dentist and hygienist are essential to maintain the health of your teeth and gums.



INFORMATION
FOR PATIENTS

A brighter smile gives a
more youthful appearance

tooth whitening

For a brighter smile

What is tooth whitening?

Tooth whitening is a cosmetic procedure for lightening the colour of teeth. Two mild bleaching preparations are generally used: either hydrogen peroxide or carbamide peroxide. These are applied in the treatment room where they can be activated by heat or light, or can be used at home in a custom-made 'tray', a transparent plastic device which is designed to hold the preparation in position over your teeth. Different strengths are prescribed for different types of use.

What causes teeth to discolour?

Teeth naturally discolour with age and 'yellowing' or 'greying' is common as we get older; this is why tooth whitening can make you look younger. Fortunately 'age yellowing' responds very well to whitening techniques. Other common causes of tooth discolouration are drinks such as coffee and red wine, foods such as curries or red berries, and smoking.

Who can benefit from tooth whitening?

Most people will benefit from tooth whitening. Existing fillings, crowns and veneers will not be lightened, but old restorations can be replaced if they look dark after the treatment is completed. Discolouration on some teeth may not respond as well as others, and some can take longer or be more difficult to treat. When you have the first consultation appointment, your dentist will advise on the most suitable techniques for your teeth, the timescale and the expected results. Tooth whitening is not recommended if you are pregnant, breast feeding or allergic to plastic or peroxide.

Can whitening toothpastes replace whitening treatment?

Whitening toothpastes are no substitute for professional tooth whitening. Although they may effectively remove stains they cannot affect the natural shade of teeth. They are helpful, however, for maintaining the appearance of professionally whitened teeth.

What is involved in the whitening process?

There are two main techniques which can be used separately or in combination, depending on individual requirements and preferences. The most popular technique is home bleaching using a 10-16%

Before



After



Before



After



Tooth whitening using Illuminé from Dentsply

carbamide peroxide gel applied in custom-made 'trays'. You will usually need to wear these trays loaded with the gel for about two hours each day, or at night, for one or two weeks. Sometimes your dentist may recommend that the teeth on your upper jaw are whitened first and those on the lower jaw second. This is because it may be more comfortable to wear the tray on just one jaw at a time and because this method can reduce the chances of tooth sensitivity.

Another technique is power whitening. This involves a stronger gel which is applied to your teeth in the treatment room. Power whitening can give you a dramatic improvement in tooth colour at the first visit although patients may need a follow up treatment. It is possible to combine the two techniques by using power whitening as an initial boost followed by home treatment to intensify the effects.

How long does it take?

The length of treatment will depend on the colour of your teeth and the results you want to achieve. For example, mild yellowing will usually respond to home treatment over the course of two to four weeks, but severe staining may take longer.

A normal result at the end of a home whitening course of treatment would be a 6-8 shade improvement in colour although in some cases it is possible to lighten teeth more. Please discuss your requirements and expectations with the dentist. Power whitening usually takes one or two appointments, each lasting approximately one hour.