



Teeth Whitening Information

General Information:

Teeth whitening is designed to lighten the color of your teeth. Significant lightening can be achieved in the vast majority of cases, but the results cannot be guaranteed. When done properly, the whitening will not harm your teeth or gums. However, like any other treatment, it has some inherent risks and limitations. These are seldom serious enough to discourage you from having your teeth whitened, but should be considered when deciding to have the treatment.

Candidates for Teeth Whitening:

Just about anyone is a candidate for teeth whitening. However, people with dark yellow or yellow-brown teeth tend to whiten better than people with gray or bluish-gray teeth. Multi-colored teeth, especially if stained due to tetracycline, do not whiten very well. Teeth with many fillings, cavities, chips, etc., are usually best treated by bonding, porcelain veneers or porcelain crowns.

Types of Teeth Whitening:

1. In Office Whitening

This process can be done in one visit or may require multiple visits depending on how your teeth respond to the whitening gel. Each appointment takes about an hour and a half. Gum protection and the whitening gel are applied.

The advantages of power whitening include our doing all the work for you and in less time than you would spend home bleaching your teeth. The disadvantages include the normal inconveniences of any dental treatment such as having to keep your mouth open for the duration of the appointment and the possibility of increased costs as compared to home whitening.

2. Home Whitening

This process, which can be done anywhere and anytime, involves wearing a custom-made bleaching tray (looks like a thin, transparent nightguard) filled with a mild bleaching agent. You must wear the gel-filled tray 30 min per day for about 7-10 days. The advantages of home whitening include performing the treatment when it is convenient for you with possibly lower cost. The disadvantage to home bleaching is that the success of the treatment is dependent on your commitment to wearing the whitening tray routinely for the period prescribed.

Hydrogen peroxide has been used for many years to bleach teeth. In past years, it was usually applied only by dentists, who used heat and/or light to accelerate its bleaching action. In recent years, a highly effective technique has been found that allows patients to bleach their teeth at home – although *only* when supervised by a dentist. *

The “at home” technique of bleaching teeth does not require heat or light, and it allows you to monitor your own progress. The amount of color change depends on the length of time you wear the tray each day and the number of weeks you continue the treatment. The results can be unpredictable. Although effects may be noticed as early as a few days, many patients report that a minimum of two weeks is required to see a color change. Peroxide bleaching in custom-fitted trays is thus the fastest and most painless method known.

The Procedure:

1. Brush and floss your teeth, in order to clean them before placement of the tray. Rinse well.
2. Place a “pin drop” amount of gel in each tooth compartment in the tray. Remember this is a guideline only – if you have small teeth, use a smaller “gel drop”. Conversely, if you have larger teeth, use a slightly larger drop. Each syringe has 6 treatment doses. Use up to one dose per tray.
3. Place the tray firmly over your teeth. Remove excess gel with your finger or dry toothbrush. When inserting the tray, be careful not to push the gel out, but be sure that the tray is completely seated. You may see “bubbling” within the trays while wearing them. This bubbling is actually part of the whitening process.
4. With 30% gel, wear the tray 30 min per day for 7-10 days or longer if needed.
5. After completing the whitening procedure, rinse you trays with water and brush clean with your toothbrush and water.

Your Responsibilities:

1. Wearing Your Whitening Tray

If you choose home whitening, it will only be effective if you conscientiously wear the tray for the prescribed number of minutes per day.

2. Communication

If you experience any severe discomfort or other problems, contact us immediately.

Potential Problems:

1. Tooth Sensitivity

During the first 24 hours following whitening, some patients experience transient sensitivity. This sensitivity is usually mild if your teeth are not normally sensitive. With power whitening, this sensitivity will usually subside in 1-2 days. With home whitening, it may be necessary for you to reduce the number of days you are wearing the bleaching tray or stop using it for a short time to resolve the sensitivity. Some patients have reported that teeth become sensitive to cold and biting pressure for a short time during and after treatments. The discomfort normally does not last for an extended time. If, however, your teeth continue to be sensitive, stop using the bleaching gel and call us.

However, if your teeth are normally sensitive, whitening may make your teeth more sensitive for an extended period of time. Under these circumstances, you may choose to delay the whitening process until we are able to complete desensitization procedures.

If your teeth are sensitive after whitening, a mild analgesic such as Tylenol or Advil will usually be effective in making you more comfortable until your teeth return to normal.

2. Discomfort

If bleaching trays are worn too long during any given day, discomfort in your jaw points may occur. This discomfort will go away when the bleaching trays are removed.

3. Gum Irritation

This is the result of a small amount of solution leaking under the gum protection. A burning sensation on your gums may also occur. This will resolve by itself in a few hours to a couple of days.

With home whitening, irritation can result from using the tray for too many hours when you first start whitening. It may be necessary for you to reduce the number of hours or days you wear the tray, or stop using it for a short time to resolve these gums problems.

4. Effect on Fillings/Crown Restorations

Be aware that tooth colored fillings or crown restorations will not whiten. If the filling or crown matches your current color, bleaching will result in mis-matched shades with your natural teeth. You may need to have your fillings or crowns replaced so that they will match your newly whitened teeth.

Completion of Treatment:

1. Level of In-Office Whitening

There is no totally reliable way to predict how light your teeth will whiten. With power whitening, one session usually significantly whitens your teeth. Some patients require an **additional session. With home whitening, this may take two to four weeks or longer.**

2. Relapse

Following completion of whitening, pigments found in food and drinks will re-stain your teeth, commonly called “bleaching relapse.” To avoid relapse, refrain from eating or drinking dark colored foods.