

## **What is tooth whitening?**

Tooth whitening is a safe, effective way to improve the appearance of your teeth making them lighter and brighter. It is particularly good at whitening age-darkened teeth. The most effective and stable clinically proven way to whiten your teeth is by home bleaching with 10% carbamide peroxide.

## **What is home bleaching?**

Our preferred method of tooth whitening is where our patients carry out the treatment at home, using custom made trays containing whitening gel. Your dentist makes accurate moulds of your teeth upon which the bleaching trays are constructed. These are fitted and you are instructed on how to apply the whitening gel (usually over night for 7-14 days).

## **What is laser whitening?**

Laser whitening and Zoom are advertised by many dental practices, these treatments are types of “power bleaching”. This means the treatment is carried out at the dental surgery with stronger peroxide gels than are given to patients to take home. Power bleaching gives a rapid result, however we would

always recommend this be followed up with a home whitening treatment to prevent significant relapse. Power bleaching does not reliably whiten teeth significantly and is more expensive

## **Can anyone have tooth whitening?**

It is important to have a full oral health check with a dentist prior to starting tooth whitening. It is important that the cause of tooth discolouration is diagnosed so that you can be informed of the likely result. The amount of whitening varies with the individual. Most patients achieve a change within 2 – 3 weeks. Teeth that are stained due to antibiotics can be whitened but do take a lot longer than age-darkened teeth.

Some patients who have white filling or crowns on their front teeth should think carefully before starting a tooth whitening treatment, as the whitening treatment will not affect the colour of any dental restorations. It may be that, following tooth whitening, restorations will stand out and you may want them replacing. Patients of all ages can have tooth whitening however it is best to avoid treatment during pregnancy. Rarely patients may have an allergy to an ingredient in the whitening gel.

## **What are the risks of tooth whitening?**

Tooth whitening under the supervision of a dental profession is a safe treatment. A small minority of patients may suffer from sensitive teeth during the period that they are whitening them, however this is easily managed by stopping whitening or applying a desensitiser. Some patients experience a tingling sensation from their gums, this is due to the gel contacting the gum tissue for an extended period and will resolve once the gel has been washed off.

Tooth whitening should only be carried out under the supervision of a dentist or an appropriately trained hygienist or dental therapist. Tooth whitening carried out by beauticians is illegal.

## **Will my teeth stay white?**

All tooth-whitening treatments relapse as the teeth take in stains from food, drinks and tobacco. The good thing about home whitening is that you have your custom made trays so it is relatively simple and not too costly to “top –up” your whitening treatment with a single application of gel after 6-12months. Just bring your trays to your check up so we can make sure they still fit accurately.

## Can my single discoloured tooth be bleached by home whitening?

A traumatised tooth may darken over time, this can be treated with home bleaching. A discoloured root filled tooth can also be treated with home bleaching with a special technique called inside-outside whitening. During this procedure a small amount of filling material is removed from the back of the tooth allowing the whitening gel to be inserted into the tooth improving the whitening effect.

The pictures below show a really good result from inside-outside whitening.



Before and after photos of one of our cases reproduced with permission from the patient.

## What about tea and coffee?

It is important to try to limit tea, coffee, red wine, berries or curries consumed during or after treatment for at least 1 month. This also applies to smoking. The teeth are dehydrated by the whitening gel so will readily take in stains for the first few hours after removing the trays.

If you have any questions about tooth whitening or would like to discuss having the treatment please talk to any of the team.



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# Tooth Whitening



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