

So, You Want a Whiter Smile?



One of the most common patient concerns that we encounter in the dental field is patient dissatisfaction with the color of their teeth. Regular use/consumption of common staining agents such as coffee, tea, and smoking can cause this undesired effect on teeth. Some toothpastes do include low level whitening and abrasive agents to help remove extrinsic staining, but their effects can be somewhat limited. Fortunately, there are several different safe and effective options available both over the counter and from your dental office to help combat tooth discoloration.

Option 1: Over-the-Counter Whitening (5-10% Hydrogen peroxide)

Whitening Strips- Whitening strips can be purchased conveniently at most grocery stores, department stores, and pharmacies. These strips are available in several different concentrations, ranging from 5%-10% Hydrogen peroxide. Regular and diligent use of whitening strips in conjunction with good oral hygiene can result in a greatly improved tooth shade, and an overall whiter smile.

- Available at most grocery stores, department stores, and pharmacies.

- Available in 5-10% Hydrogen peroxide

- Use: 1x/day, 30 minutes (may vary with different brands). Brush/floss prior to use. Strips are placed on anterior teeth, avoid touching gum tissues. Brush teeth after use to remove residual gel.

- *Available in Professional Strength, 14% Hydrogen Peroxide. Only available from dental professionals.



Option 2: Professional-Strength Whitening (15%-35% Hydrogen/Carbamide Peroxide)

Pre-filled Trays- Regular use of Pre-filled trays can be effective in achieving a whiter tooth shade, and are available for purchase in this office. They are sold in packs of twenty (upper/lower trays, 10-days of use)

- Available at many dental offices. 15% Hydrogen Peroxide, 20-pack (10 days of use)

- Use: 1x/day, 15-20 minutes. Brush/floss prior to use. Trays are placed on both upper and lower teeth. Brush teeth after use to remove residual gel.

Custom Trays- Custom Trays are an excellent option for tooth whitening, as the trays are made from impressions of your actual teeth, which creates a more effective treatment and a more comfortable fit. After a short twenty-minute appointment with the dentist, where impressions are taken of the upper and lower teeth, trays are formed and cut to specifically fit your teeth, allowing bleaching gel to get a more even coating and effective whitening.

-Available at many dental offices. 35% Carbamide peroxide.

-Use: Brush/floss teeth prior to use. Using syringe of bleaching gel, place one small drop of gel (size of a small tear-drop) in each tooth slot, taking care to not over-fill, as gel will disperse throughout trays upon application over the teeth. Wear trays for 30 minutes. Brush teeth after use to remove residual gel.

-Trays can be used daily until desired shade is achieved.

Option 3: In-Office Professional Whitening

In-Office Professional Whitening- For those who desire a more immediate whitening result, or for those who do not wish to wear trays on a regular basis, in-office whitening may be a fitting option. During a one-hour dental visit, bleaching gel is applied to the teeth by a dental professional over three 15-20 minute sessions, allowing for nearly immediate tooth whitening

-Available at many dental offices. 40% hydrogen peroxide.

-Procedure: Prescription-strength high-fluoride toothpaste is given to the patient two weeks prior to procedure (use for brushing 1x/day). At appointment, gums and lips are isolated, allowing the dental professional easy access to the teeth. Gel is applied to the teeth, and remains in place for 15-20 minutes, is removed by dental professional, and is then re-applied

-Whitening toothpaste is dispensed following procedure to help prevent future staining

FYI...



*Although excellent results can be achieved through both over-the-counter and professional whitening procedures, it cannot be guaranteed that the desired shade will always be reached. Some patients have a tendency to achieve whitening results more quickly due to natural tooth shade, compliance, etc.

*Occasional temporary tooth sensitivity can result from tooth whitening, as the teeth become temporarily dehydrated following whitening procedures. This side effect is temporary, and a high-fluoride/desensitising toothpaste is recommended to decrease it. In the event of tooth sensitivity, frequency of whitening can be decreased until sensitivity decreases or resolves.

*Although natural tooth shade can be altered by whitening products/procedures, the shade of tooth-colored restorations (fillings, caps/crowns, veneers, etc.) is not altered by whitening gel. In the event that any restorative work is desired, tooth whitening is best performed prior to dental work, as the shade of the restoration can be customized to match the new, whiter tooth shade.