



TOOTH WHITENING – Frequently Asked Questions

Is tooth whitening for you?

Generally, whitening is successful in at least 90 percent of patients, though it may not be an option for everyone. Consider tooth whitening if your teeth are darkened from age, coffee, tea or smoking. Teeth darkened with the color of yellow, brown or orange respond better to lightening. Other types of gray stains caused by fluorosis, smoking or tetracycline are lightened, but results are not as dramatic. If you have very sensitive teeth, periodontal disease, or teeth with worn enamel, your dentist may discourage whitening.

What's involved?

We use dentist-supervised at-home bleaching. At the first appointment, the dentist or hygienist will make impressions of your teeth to fabricate a mouthguard appliance for you. The mouthguard is custom made for your mouth and is lightweight so that it can be worn comfortably while you are awake or sleeping. The mouthguard is so thin that you should even be able to talk and work while wearing your mouthguard. Along with this whitening tray, you'll receive the whitening materials. You'll be given instructions on how to wear the whitening tray. Generally, we recommend whitening at night while you sleep. This type of system usually requires only 10-14 days to complete.

How long does it last?

Lightness should last from one to five years, depending on your personal habits such as smoking and drinking coffee and tea. At this point you may choose to get a touch up. This procedure may not be as costly because you can probably still use the same trays. The retreatment time also is much shorter than the original treatment time.

How does it work?

The active ingredient in most of the whitening agents is 10% or 16% carbamide peroxide (CH₄N₂O₂), also known as urea peroxide; when water contacts this white crystal, the release of hydrogen peroxide lightens the teeth.

Is it safe? Any side effects?

Several studies, during the past five years, have proven whitening to be safe and effective. Some patients may experience slight gum irritation or tooth sensitivity, which will resolve when the treatment ends.

What are realistic expectations?

No one can really predict how much lighter your teeth will become. Every case is different. Typically, there is a two-shade improvement as seen on a dentist's shade guide. The success rate depends upon the type of stain involved and your compliance. Whitening can only provide a shift in color from gray to a lighter shade of gray, for example. Whitening does not lighten artificial materials such as resins or porcelains.