



Patient Information on Home Whitening Treatment

Your dentist has given you a whitening kit to take home with you together with your whitening trays. It is essential that you follow the instructions given by your dentist and the manufacturers' instructions in wearing the trays and applying the whitening agent.

How long should I wear the trays for?

This depends on the amount of lightening that you desire and the original shade of the teeth. If your teeth are quite dark or very yellow/ grey/ tetracycline stained it will take longer to bleach the teeth. If you are not experiencing any sensitivity you may wear the trays for 1 hour or even sleep with the trays in your mouth **(dependent on the type of whitening gels provided)**. It is very important to remove all the excess material around the gums or the palate prior to sleeping with the trays.

The darker your teeth, the longer they will take to get lighter. Tetracycline stained teeth can take from 6 months to one year to reach the desired colour. Some teeth can whiten after one month.

Whiten your teeth according to your own schedule. Some people put the trays in after dinner and wear them for the first hour while watching TV or doing the dishes. Repeating this process on a daily basis provides better results than having gaps as the process requires momentum to achieve optimal results.

What do I do if I have any sensitivity?

Sensitivity of teeth is the most common side effect of home whitening. In fact many patients suffer from sensitive teeth anyway. This occurs usually around the necks of the teeth where the gums have receded. If you are experiencing any sensitivity you should stop whitening your teeth momentarily. If the teeth become ultra sensitive you can place sensitive toothpaste into the whitening trays for an hour a day. Alternatively you can rub the sensitising toothpaste into the gum margins with your finger 5 times per day for a few days. If you are at all concerned, please call your dentist.

What happens if the teeth do not whiten evenly?

If the teeth have white spots on them before whitening, these spots will appear whiter during the first few days, however the contrast between the spots and the rest of the tooth will be less and eventually they will not be noticeable. Sometimes the dentist can perform a special procedure called microabrasion for you where the white spots can be more permanently removed. Ask your dentist about the procedure if you are concerned about this.

You may notice new white spots occurring on the teeth while you are undertaking the whitening treatment. These white spots were already present on the teeth before whitening. As the teeth become lighter they become more visible. Do not worry. As the whole tooth becomes lighter these spots will fade. You may notice these white spots immediately after a whitening session or in the morning if you have been wearing the trays for the whole night.

Some teeth may appear banded with lighter/whiter areas, this is because these bandings are originally present on the tooth but when the tooth was dark these bandings were not obvious. As the tooth becomes lighter, the lighter parts of the tooth will lighten first followed by the darker banded area.

How will my teeth feel?

Normally the teeth feel very clean after the whitening procedure. The whitening materials also have an indirect effect on the gums of improving their health. This is how the technique was invented as it was first used to treat the gum irritation caused by orthodontic treatment.

What about my smile?

Your smile will appear brighter as a bonus. It is very rare, but sometimes the teeth do not lighten at all. If this happens and you are wearing the whitening trays as recommended, you may need to try a different whitening product or a slightly higher concentration of the whitening material. Discuss this with your dentist.

If you have white fillings in the front teeth that match the existing shade of your teeth before whitening your teeth, they may not match the teeth afterwards. This is because your teeth can lighten, but the fillings do not lighten. When the desired colour has been achieved, the dentist can replace these fillings with a lighter shade of filling material to match the new shade of your teeth. Normally the dentist will wait at least 2 weeks before changing the fillings.

How long does the whitening last? Will I have to whiten my teeth again?

Normally the new white colour of your teeth keeps quite well. The effect is dependent on what has caused the teeth to discolour in the first place. If you drink coffee, red wine, cola drinks the effect may darken slightly. Some patients have a top up treatment after 2 years. Some patients do not need to. The normal protocol is to do a single session every 6mths to maintain the white colour achieved, or 3mths if you have a highly staining diet/habit.

Does whitening harm the teeth or gums?

Safety studies have shown that whitening teeth using the dentist prescribed home whitening technique is perfectly safe on the teeth, cheeks, gum and tissue of the mouth. Whitening the teeth with the dentist prescribed kits is equivalent to drinking one soda drink. The whitening material has a neutral ph.

There are problems with the whitening kits that are purchased over the counter. Although they are inexpensive, they normally contain an acid rinse, which can damage the teeth or thin down the enamel of the teeth. This acid rinse can be extremely harmful to the teeth.

The technique of whitening is not for everybody. There are some situations where whitening teeth is contraindicated such as where the front teeth are already crowned or where there are very large fillings on the front teeth or where the teeth are already excessively worn and there is tooth surface loss. The most ideal situation is where the teeth are healthy and strong but have become more discoloured with age.