

## ***Make your teeth whiter and brighter***

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Stained or gray teeth can be significantly 'whitened' using advanced modern materials. The treatment is also called 'bleaching' or 'brightening'. More often, tooth whitening is undertaken in a dental practice. If done at home, it should still follow dentist instructions to ensure safe and effective results.

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### ***Need for a guiding hand***

How many of us look at our teeth in the mirror and say "I wish they were whiter"? We live in an aesthetically conscious world, which affects our teeth as it does the other parts of our body. Numerous products on the market, from toothpastes to special creams, promise a 'whitening' effect. But most of them are either ineffective or potentially harmful.

If you want to whiten your teeth, you should do so with a dentist's supervision. Otherwise you risk burning or injuring delicate oral tissues. That's why 'whitening' has become such a popular option in dental care today.

### ***Harmless procedure***

Tooth whitening is a dental procedure that can brighten the colour of the tooth enamel, as well as remove stains and certain discolouration. Changes in colour due to superficial staining caused by coffee, tea or smoking can lighten by four to five shades. When the gray colour is due to the pigmentation within teeth, it will lighten two to three shades. The procedure itself is harmless and can be done at any age. However not every tooth can be whitened, so dental advice is required first.

### ***Choice of methods***

Assuming that your natural teeth are amenable to whitening, you can undertake treatment either in the dental practice or at home.

#### **In-surgery method**

This involves applying a concentrated oxidizing gel to the teeth (either Hydrogen Peroxide or Carbamide Peroxide). The gums around all the upper and lower teeth are covered with a special protective rubber material. The lips and the tongue are gently 'kept out of the way'. A special light source applied to each tooth, or to all the teeth together, activates the bleaching process. The entire procedure takes 1-1½ hours. During this time you can listen to music or watch a DVD. In The Bright Side practice we use the new 'BriteSmile' system or a dental laser, both imported from the USA.

We can usually achieve significant results after one visit, but further visits may be required to achieve the degree of whiteness that you desire.

### **At-home method**

The dentist constructs special thin, light and transparent fitting trays from individual models of the patient's upper and lower teeth. A small amount of oxidizing gel (15% strength as opposed to 35% strength used by dentists) is placed on the inside surface of each tray by the patient and worn overnight for about eight nights.

### ***Can all teeth be whitened?***

The whitening or bleaching process can work on all natural teeth, although the degree of whitening will depend on age and the initial colour of the teeth. Any 'man-made' material used on the teeth, such as crowns, veneers and fillings are not affected. In rare cases, when teeth have been badly discoloured as a result of using antibiotics in childhood, more extensive cosmetic work will be required to achieve a whitening effect.

### **Safety aspects**

Tooth whitening is safe. The active materials, Hydrogen Peroxide or Carbamide Peroxide, have been used by the dental profession for many years, with no indication of any harmful effects.

If some of the stronger 'in-surgery' gel goes onto the gums, lips or tongue, it just makes the soft tissues go 'white' for a while. The effect is effectively neutralised and reversed with the application of Vitamin E gel. Again, no damage is caused.

### **Comfort aspects**

In most cases the whitening process is painless. However should patients experience a tingling sensation during the procedure and/or some degree of temperature sensitivity, the dentist can apply an analgesic. After the whitening treatment there may be a minor dull ache for up to 24 hours, which is also resolved with an analgesic.

### ***How long will 'whitening' last?***

You can expect the effects to last up to three years, gradually diminishing over time. It is unlikely that your tooth colour will revert totally to its original shade. Of course, if you pay attention to your oral hygiene, avoid heavily stained food and drink as well as heavy smoking, you'll prolong the whitening effect.

### ***How much does it cost?***

Costs vary – the average is from £350 to £600 - depending on whether you choose the 'in-surgery' or 'at-home' method. At The Bright Side we find that the most common, effective and time-efficient procedure is the 'in-surgery' power whitening procedure.

***Should you start off with a consultation?***

A dental consultation is not essential, but nevertheless advisable. Although tooth whitening is a simple procedure, it needs to be evaluated alongside other aspects of smile and tooth enhancement. What is the shape and position of your teeth? What about crowns and fillings that will not whiten? How much whitening can you expect with your shade of teeth? What are your habits? How quickly do you want to see results?

These questions help the dentist to determine the best possible treatment plan for you.

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***Tooth whitening can make a significant difference to your smile. It is an inexpensive and effective procedure, whether done at home or in the dental practice. Discuss all aspects with your dentist as part of a 'Smile Analysis' appointment.***

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