

Teeth Whitening: A Guide to a Brighter Smile



A bright, white smile can make you feel confident and beautiful. Teeth whitening is a popular cosmetic dental procedure that can help you achieve a brighter smile by removing stains and discoloration from your teeth. This patient information brochure will explain what teeth whitening is, how it works, and what you can expect during and after the procedure.

What is Teeth Whitening?

Teeth whitening is a cosmetic dental procedure that involves removing stains and discoloration from your teeth to make them look brighter and whiter. This is typically achieved through the use of bleaching agents, which penetrate the enamel of your teeth and remove the stains.

There are two main types of teeth whitening: **in-office whitening** and **at-home whitening**. In-office whitening is done in the dentist's office, while at-home whitening is done using custom-fitted trays and whitening gel that you can use at home.

How Does Teeth Whitening Work?

Teeth whitening works by using bleaching agents to remove stains and discoloration from your teeth. The most commonly used bleaching agent is hydrogen peroxide, which breaks down the molecules that cause the stains and discoloration on your teeth.



In-office teeth whitening typically involves applying a high-concentration hydrogen peroxide gel to your teeth and using a special light to activate the gel. The procedure usually takes about an hour and can result in teeth that are up to eight shades whiter.



At-home teeth whitening typically involves using custom-fitted trays that are filled with a lower-concentration hydrogen peroxide gel. You wear the trays for a set amount of time each day, usually for a week or two, until you achieve the desired level of whiteness.

What Can You Expect During the Teeth Whitening Procedure?

If you choose to have in-office teeth whitening, you can expect to spend about an hour in the dentist's office. The first step is to prepare your teeth by cleaning them and removing any plaque or tartar. The dentist will then apply a protective gel to your gums to protect them from the bleaching agent.

Next, the dentist will apply the hydrogen peroxide gel to your teeth and use a special light to activate the gel. You may feel some sensitivity or discomfort during the procedure, but this is normal and should go away after the procedure is over.

If you choose to do at-home teeth whitening, your dentist will first make custom-fitted trays that fit your teeth perfectly. You will be given a lower-concentration hydrogen peroxide gel to use with the trays. You will wear the trays for a set amount of time each day, usually for a week or two, until you achieve the desired level of whiteness.

What Are the Risks and Side Effects of Teeth Whitening?

Teeth whitening is generally safe, but there are some risks and side effects to be aware of. The most common side effect is tooth sensitivity, which can occur during and after the procedure. This sensitivity usually goes away within a few days.

Other side effects include gum irritation and white spots on the teeth. These side effects are rare and usually go away on their own.

If you have gum disease or tooth decay, you should not undergo teeth whitening until these issues have been addressed. Teeth whitening can also cause existing dental work, such as fillings or crowns, to become discolored. Your dentist can help you determine if teeth whitening is right for you based on your dental health and history.

How Can You Maintain Your Bright, White Smile?

To maintain your bright, white smile after teeth whitening, it's important to practice good oral hygiene. This includes brushing your teeth twice a day with a fluoride toothpaste, flossing daily,