

Bleaching Teeth at Home

Hydrogen peroxide has been used for many years to bleach teeth. In the past, hydrogen peroxide was usually applied by dentists in the office, and used with heat or light to stimulate its bleaching action.

In recent years, patients have applied peroxide to teeth at home using custom fitted trays supplied by their dentist. This technique has been highly effective, and it does not require heat or light. At this time, bleaching teeth outside of the dental office with peroxide in custom fitted trays is relatively simple with few side effects.

A number of commercial products such as *Crest White Strips* and *Colgate Simply White* are now available over the counter at your local Pharmacy. The bleach concentrate of these products is not as strong as the dentist supplied techniques, however they do work effectively for some patients.

It has been shown scientifically that the use of Laser bleaching is no more effective than the simpler and less expensive 'at home tray technique'. The other advantage of the 'at home technique' is that you can re-use your custom tray in the future to boost the color of your teeth since the teeth can relapse slightly in color over time.

POTENTIAL SIDE EFFECTS

The experience of tens of thousands of patients using home bleaching has shown the following occasional side effects:

1. **Tooth Sensitivity:** A few people experience tooth sensitivity. This condition is reduced if bleaching times are reduced, or it is eliminated if bleaching is discontinued.
2. **Gum Tenderness:** Occasionally, gum tissues become irritated and inflamed. Reduction of the bleaching time or coating the soft tissues with Vaseline before bleaching usually cures the tissue irritation.

PATIENT INSTRUCTIONS (Standard Bleaching Sequence)

1. Bleaching could be done once a day for 1 to 2 hours per application. Place a small amount of bleaching gel into each space in the tray for every tooth to be lightened.
2. Insert the tray into your mouth over the teeth, expectorate excess gel. Remove any excess gel from your gums using a soft toothbrush.
3. Remove the tray, and clean it using your toothbrush.
4. Rinse the tray with tap water after use, and tip it upside down to allow drying before next use. Fluoride containing toothpaste and mouth rinse may be used if desired.
5. Discontinue bleaching if tooth sensitivity, gum irritation, or any other negative event occurs. Notify us of the problem immediately, and we will advise you.

We have recorded the colour of your teeth at the initiation of bleaching. We will monitor the colour changes with you and advise you when the bleaching process appears to be completed.

The average time for optimum colour change to occur when bleaching once per day is two to four weeks, although effects may be noticed as early as a few days. Brown, orange, and yellow stains bleach faster and easier than blue or grey stains. Observation appointments are necessary after two weeks for us to check the progress of the bleaching. Touch up bleaching sessions once or twice a year may be needed to retain the desirable bleached shade of the teeth. The bleaching process to lighten teeth is an unpredictable procedure. Some patients will receive dramatic lightening of the colour of their teeth, while others will have a less dramatic result. Unfortunately we cannot predict the degree of lightening, however the fee we charge for this service is based on time and therefore cannot be based on the final result.