

Teeth whitening is a highly effective way of lightening the natural colour of your teeth without removing any of the tooth surface.

Why whiten my teeth?

White teeth look great- attractive, youthful and clean. Few people have naturally white teeth, and teeth can become darker with age. Smoking and drinks such as tea, coffee and red wine will also progressively darken the teeth.

What does teeth whitening involve?

Teeth whitening is a bleaching process that lightens discoloration and removes stains from within the enamel of the teeth.

During your consultation the procedure will be discussed with you to determine if tooth whitening is suitable in your case. Teeth whitening does not affect the colour of artificial teeth, crowns, veneers or fillings.

An impression of your teeth is taken with a dental compound. This is used to make thin, clear trays, which fit snugly over your teeth. You are given syringes of gel that contain a 15% carbamide peroxide bleaching agent. You simply place some of the gel in the tray and fit it over your teeth for a few hours daily for one to three weeks. You need to wear the tray for at least three hours each day- or overnight if you prefer. We will see you again to review progress after two weeks.

Is the process safe?

Yes. Research and clinical studies indicate that whitening teeth with carbamide peroxide and/or hydrogen peroxide under the supervision of a dentist is safe for teeth and gums.

How long will my teeth stay whiter?

The effects of whitening normally last for many years, although this will vary from person to person. Inevitably with time the teeth will start to darken again due to drinks and food (and more rapidly if you are a smoker). Most people like to maintain their whitening effect by using the gel for one or two nights every three to six months.

Is teeth whitening OK for everyone?

Teeth whitening can only lighten the existing colour of your natural teeth. It will not work on any types of 'false' teeth such as crowns, veneers or dentures. These may need replacing if they are stained or are the wrong colour. If you have white fillings, these will not change and may also need to be replaced to match your whitened teeth.

What if I am pregnant?

To date, there has been no testing done on the effects of teeth whitening while pregnant or breast-feeding. To be cautious we recommend that you do not have your teeth whitened during pregnancy.



The teeth of our Assistant Manager, George, after whitening

Are there any side effects?

Most people find that their teeth become sensitive to cold during the treatment. This lessens after a few days, but you may find you need to have a break from whitening for a day or so or use a toothpaste such as "Sensodyne" to reduce the effect. If you have natural white flecks in your enamel these will become more apparent during treatment but will fade following treatment.

Are there other methods?

Yes: "Zoom", "power whitening" and "laser whitening" are all techniques which are completed at a single visit in the surgery. They use extra strong gels kept on the teeth for an hour and are often activated using bright lights. There are some disadvantages to this technique: it is more expensive, can be uncomfortable and can produce a less long-term shade change of the teeth; largely due to dehydration of the enamel. However, if in-surgery whitening is used and followed up with home whitening it can give outstanding results. Please ask your dentist if you are interested in this type of whitening.

What about whitening toothpastes?

Whitening toothpastes do not affect the natural colour of your teeth. They may be effective at removing staining and may help maintain the effect of professional whitening.

What about home kits?

Home kits are cheap, but are usually not very effective. Over-the-counter kits sold in the UK are not recommended as they contain only a very small concentration of peroxide (the whitening agent). To be effective gels need to have at least 3.6%. Many home kits contain mild acids and/or abrasives. Acid or abrasives used on the teeth will ultimately make the teeth even yellower with time by damaging the enamel of your teeth.

Teeth whitening is not available as NHS treatment