

You have discussed the procedure of tooth whitening which is designed to lighten the colour of your teeth.

Significant whitening can be achieved in a large majority of cases, but the **results cannot be guaranteed and are not permanent**. The technique is designed to cause no harm to your teeth or gums but, as with all treatments, there are risks and limitations. You should consider these before embarking on the treatment.

The active ingredient in the treatment is a peroxide bleaching agent. If you are aware of any allergy or have had any sort of adverse reaction to this agent, either in any other form of treatment or with previous tooth whitening, you must not proceed with the treatment.

Almost any adult may benefit from tooth whitening, but the degree of success may vary.

People with yellow or yellow-brown teeth tend to achieve better whitening than people with grey or bluish-grey teeth. Multi-coloured teeth, especially those discoloured as a result of treatment with the antibiotic tetracycline, do not whiten well. Teeth with many fillings, cavities, chips or erosion are usually best treated with cosmetic composite fillings, porcelain crowns or porcelain veneers. Existing restorations of any sort (fillings, crowns, veneers, inlays) cannot be whitened.

Whitening of teeth should not be undertaken in any patient who is under the age of 18, who is pregnant or who believes that she could be pregnant. While no adverse reactions have been reported with tooth whitening gels, there is no information about long-term clinical effects.

Home whitening can be done anywhere at any time. It involves wearing a custom-made whitening tray filled with a mild whitening agent for optimal results. You should wear the gel-filled tray as prescribed by the dentist and the programme of whitening will depend on the make and strength of the whitening agent. You should continue the treatment for about one to two weeks, depending on the degree of whitening desired. Home whitening has the advantage that it can be carried out at a time which is convenient for you. However, the disadvantage is that the degree of success is dependent on wearing the whitening trays consistently as prescribed.

Your dentist or hygienist will guide you in choosing the method of whitening most appropriate for you.

### Risks and Disadvantages

- **Tooth sensitivity.** Most patient experience transient tooth sensitivity. It is usually mild in teeth which are not normally sensitive. It usually subsides rapidly within a few days of stopping treatment. If sensitivity is more painful or troublesome, it may be necessary to reduce the number of minutes you are wearing the whitening trays or it may be necessary to stop using them for several days to resolve the sensitivity. Note that, if your teeth are normally sensitive, whitening may make them more sensitive for an extended period of time.

- **Gum irritation** may result from small amounts of the whitening gel coming into contact with the gums. This may cause short-term inflammation and the development of white spots on the gum together with a temporary burning sensation. The symptoms should resolve in a matter of a few hours to a few days.

With home whitening irritation can result from over-filling the trays causing leakage on to the gum tissues. Irritation can also occur if trays are used for too many hours when you first start whitening. It may be necessary for you to reduce the amount of gel placed and reduce the amount of time you are wearing the trays or alternatively you may have to stop wearing them altogether for a few days.

- **The level of whitening** achieved cannot be reliably predicted. It is not possible to know, in any individual, how much lighter the teeth will become.
  - With surgery whitening, one session normally produces significant whitening. Sometimes a second session is required.
  - With home whitening it may be necessary to repeat applications to achieve the necessary result. The final degree of improvement cannot be guaranteed. The effectiveness of tooth whitening varies with each individual although most patients achieve noticeable improvement in two to five weeks.

- **During treatment**

- Reduce consumption of tea, coffee and red wine.
- Do not eat berries or curries for the duration of your treatment and for one month after completion.
- Do not smoke during your treatment and for up to six weeks afterwards.
- Avoid eating or drinking anything that would stain a white shirt for 2 hours after whitening

Failure to follow this advice will result in reduced success.

- **Relapse.** Following the completion of whitening pigments found in food and drinks will re-stain the teeth, commonly called 'whitening relapse'. This is particularly true of the agents listed above. When you have achieved the degree of whitening you require, please keep your bleaching trays so that they can be used for 'top-up' treatments. Some people may not need or choose not to repeat the process. However, for others, recurrence of staining may necessitate re-starting the treatment for a night or two.

## PATIENT CONSENT



### I hereby consent to undergo a tooth whitening procedure.

The technique and procedure has been explained to me by:

\_\_\_\_\_  
(name of dentist)

I understand the nature of the treatment, its purpose, risks and alternatives. I have been given the opportunity to ask any questions and understand that, should any changes in the treatment be required, they will be explained to me and my specific consent will be obtained.

Name of Patient \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Dentist \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_



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