

amersham dental care

Tooth Whitening

What to expect during your whitening/bleaching treatment

You will be given you a whitening kit to take home with you together with your bleaching trays. It is essential that you follow the instructions given by your dentist and the manufacturers' instructions in wearing the trays and applying the bleaching agent.

How long should I wear the trays for?

This depends on the amount of lightening that you desire and the original shade of the teeth. If your teeth are quite dark or are very yellow/grey/tetracycline stained it will take longer to bleach the teeth. If you are not experiencing any sensitivity you may wear the trays for 30 minutes a day. Do not sleep with the trays in your mouth. It is very important to remove all of the excess whitening material around the gums or palate after fitting the trays.

The darker your teeth, the longer it will take to get lighter. Tetracycline stained teeth can take 6 months or up to one year to bleach the teeth. Your dentist will advise you on the realistic expectations and how to proceed.

If you cannot wear the trays for a few days because of your hectic schedule, it does not matter. Bleach your teeth according to your own schedule. Some people put the trays in after dinner and wear them while watching TV or doing the dishes!

What do I do if I have any sensitivity?

Sensitivity is the most common side effect of home bleaching. In fact many patients suffer from generally sensitive teeth any way. This occurs usually around the neck of the teeth where the gums have receded. If you are experiencing any sensitivity you should stop bleaching your teeth for a few days. You can resume after 2 to 3 days. If the teeth become ultra sensitive you can place sensitive toothpaste into the bleaching trays and wear them for an hour a day. That will usually stop the sensitivity. Alternatively you can rub the sensitive toothpaste into the gum margins with your finger 5 times per day for a few days. If you are at all concerned, please call your dentist.

What happens if the teeth do not bleach evenly?

If the teeth have white spots on them before bleaching, these will appear whiter during the first few days, however the contrast between the spots and the rest of the tooth will reduce and eventually they will not be noticeable. Sometimes the dentist can perform a special procedure called *Microabrasion* for you where the white spots can be more permanently removed. Please ask your dentist about the procedure if you are concerned about this.

You may notice new white spots occurring on the teeth while you are undertaking the bleaching treatment. These white spots were already present on the teeth before bleaching. As the teeth become lighter they become more visible. Do not worry. As the whole tooth itself becomes lighter these spots will fade. You may notice these spots immediately after a bleaching session.

Some teeth may appear banded with lighter or whiter areas. Again these banding are originally present on the tooth. As the tooth is dark these bandings are not obvious. As the tooth becomes lighter, the lightest parts of the tooth will lighten first followed by the darker banded areas. After a week or so these will hardly be noticeable any more.

How will my teeth feel?

Normally the teeth feel very clean after the bleaching procedure. The bleaching materials also have an indirect effect on the gums by helping them to heal or improve the health of the gums. This is how the technique was devised as it was first used to heal gum irritation during orthodontic treatment.

What about my smile?

Your smile will appear brighter as a bonus. It is very rare, but sometimes the teeth do not lighten at all. If this happens and you are wearing the bleaching trays as recommended, you may need to try a different bleaching product or a slightly higher concentration of the bleaching material. The dentist can do a few "Power Bleaching Sessions" for you while you relax in the chair. Discuss this with your dentist.

If you have white fillings in the front teeth that match the existing shade of your teeth before you bleach your teeth, they may not match the teeth afterwards. This is because your teeth can lighten, but the fillings do not generally lighten. When the desired colour has been achieved, the dentist can replace these fillings with a lighter shade of filling material to match the new shade of your teeth. Normally the dentist will wait several weeks before changing the fillings.

How long does the bleaching last? Will I have to bleach my teeth again?

Normally, the new white colour of your teeth maintains well. The effect is dependent on what has caused the teeth to discolour in the first place. If you drink lots of coffee, red wine, cola drinks the effect may darken slightly. Some patients do a top up treatment after 1-2 years.

The dentist will normally ask you to return your trays after the desired shade of lightening has been achieved. This is to ensure that you do not over bleach your teeth.

Does Bleaching harm the teeth or gums?

Safety studies have shown that bleaching teeth using the dentist prescribed home bleaching technique is perfectly safe on the teeth, cheeks, gum & tissues of the mouth. Bleaching the teeth with the dentist prescribed kits is equivalent to drinking one fizzy drink. The bleaching material has a neutral ph.

There are problems with the bleaching kits that are purchased over the counter. Although they are inexpensive, they normally contain an acid rinse, which can damage the teeth or thin down the enamel of the teeth. This acid rinse can be extremely harmful to the teeth. There was a reported case where a patient purchased the kit over the counter. The teeth went darker as the patient continued using the treatment. This was because the acid rinse had worn the enamel away and the darker shade was the dentine that was exposed.

It is best to stop smoking for at least 3 weeks before commencing the bleaching procedure. Smoking causes the teeth to darker anyway and the good effects will be diminished.

The technique of Bleaching Teeth is not for everybody. There are some situations where bleaching teeth is contraindicated such as where the front teeth are already crowned or where there are very large fillings on the front teeth or where the teeth are excessively worn and there is tooth surface loss. The most ideal situation is where there is not much wrong with the teeth except the colour which has become more yellow with age.

Further Questions?

If there are any further questions please do not hesitate to ask your dentist.

Teeth Whitening Instructions (Colgate Max White Professional)

Your teeth whitening kit contains custom fit upper and lower bleaching trays, storage case, and your bleaching gels. Before beginning your bleaching process, try on trays for fit and comfort.

1. Brush and floss your teeth.
2. Place a small pea size drop of gel into each tooth compartment in the tray as described by your dentist.
3. Place trays with gel in the mouth making sure they are completely seated. When seating trays, **do not** press too firmly on the tray. This will cause the bleaching gel to extrude from the trays.
4. Remove excess bleaching gel from around the edge of the bleaching tray with your clean fingers or your toothbrush.
5. Wear your bleaching trays for 30 minutes during the day.
6. After whitening your teeth for 30 minutes remove the trays. Brush and rinse your teeth to remove excess bleaching gels.
7. Clean your trays by gently brushing them with your toothbrush and rinsing them with cold water. **Do not** boil your trays or use hot water. Doing so will distort and damage them. Place trays in the storage case and keep in cool, dry place.

Continue the whitening process once daily for 4 days or until you are satisfied with the whitening procedure or the kit is completed. The procedure should be re assessed by your dentist. Store any remaining gel in the refrigerator for later use.

Whitened teeth will always be lighter than they were prior to the bleaching process. Although rare, some patients may never need to repeat this process. However, others will notice their teeth acquiring stains over a period of time. If so, they will need to do a touch-up process for one or two nights every 3-6 months.

The vials contain 6% Hydrogen peroxide gel. Pay attention not to allow the gel to come into contact with materials, as it will bleach them e.g. pillowcases.

If sensitivity should arise please contact the practice for advice.

During the procedure period, avoid food that can stain your teeth, such as red wine, tea, coffee, curries etc. Obviously, avoid smoking.

If you get it onto your skin, wash with soap and water. If you get it in your eyes, flush with lots of water. If ingested, drink large amounts of water or milk. Keep away from children or pets.