

INFORMATION ON TOOTH BLEACHING

Tooth lightening is a bleaching process that reverses discolorations of enamel to create a brighter appearance. No natural tooth structure is lost, and no anesthetic is required. The process does take time and requires some effort on your part.

First, an examination must be performed to see if you are a good candidate for lightening. The teeth must be free of plaque and tartar, so a good time to start is shortly after a cleaning. Any decay in the areas to be bleached must be restored first, and active gum disease must be controlled before bleaching. Tooth-colored fillings and crowns do not lighten with bleaching. They may require replacement after bleaching is complete. Finally, patients with root exposure (receded gums), abraded tooth edges or extremely sensitive teeth are poor candidates for tooth lightening treatment.

The procedure involves wearing a custom-fitted tray (usually while you sleep) containing a gel-like material. You will wear the tray nightly or on alternating nights, depending on your comfort level, for a period of several weeks, in most cases. Tooth lightening is not totally predictable. The treatment may take longer. There are also rare cases where treatment yields little or no result. During the process, you must return to the office for short appointments to ensure that the lightening system is working effectively and to assure that your teeth and gums remain healthy. We usually start with the upper arch only and treat the lower arch later, if so desired.

There are several temporary side effects that occur to some extent in most cases. Cold sensitivity of the teeth and gum tenderness are very common. If either occurs and is more than mild, please stop bleaching and call the office for advice. Some patients' teeth exhibit a chalky appearance for a short time. Also, minor imperfections such as white lines and white specks, which are present before bleaching, may become more noticeable in the early stages of lightening. Pregnant or lactating women should not undergo bleaching, nor is it recommended for use on children under age 14.

To stay bright, periodic touch-ups may be necessary for one or two nights, once or twice a year. This will depend on your staining habits, such as smoking, and coffee, tea or red wine consumption. There is a nominal fee for future touch-up tubes, if needed.

Please be aware that tooth lightening is purely cosmetic and is, therefore, not covered by insurance.

BLEACHING GEL TUBES MUST BE REFRIGERATED TO MAINTAIN POTENCY.

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