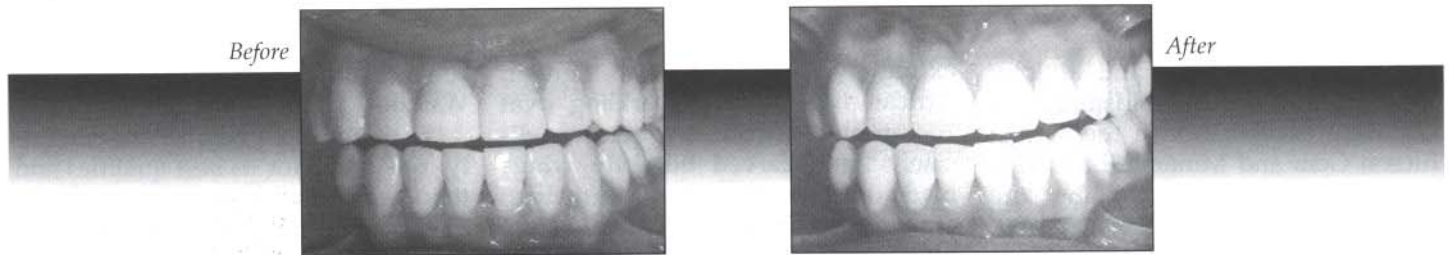


Tooth Whitening Today

Tooth whitening or "bleaching" became popular during the 1990's as result of the development of custom mouthguard bleaching. Its popularity was due to the new process being safer, effective, and relatively easy. Before custom mouthguard

bleaching, tooth whitening involved harsher chemicals that had several side effects. Namely, they caused gum damage and tooth sensitivity, sometimes even necessitating root canals (a high price to pay for whiter teeth). Since that time, more bleaching meth-

ods have become available, including custom mouthguard bleaching, in-office bleaching with laser or bleach light (like Bright Smile), and over-the-counter bleach systems.



Custom Mouthguard Bleaching

What is it?

Dentist-assisted bleaching. The dentist makes custom fit mouthguards (bleach trays). A small amount of bleach gel is placed in the trays that are worn at night (or during the day) for one to two weeks.

How Does It Work?

The bleach gel oxidizes (bleaches) stains within the tooth. The tooth "whitens" while the tooth structure remains unchanged.

The Pros:

The safest and most effective way of bleaching teeth available today. The dentist monitors the bleaching process and can adjust the bleach strength as needed for each individual patient. No long-term side effects. There may be tooth sensitivity or gum irritation, but it will disappear when bleaching is stopped.

The Cons:

Need to wear bleach trays at night while sleeping or find 30 minutes twice a day to wear the trays.

In-Office Bleaching

What is it?

Bleaching the teeth in a single visit to the dental office using higher concentrated bleach gels along with increased heat and light to produce faster bleaching results. Laser bleaching (the laser is used to generate heat and light) and Bright Smile (a bleach light is used to generate heat and light) are examples of this bleaching method.

The Pros:

Tooth whitening is accomplished more quickly and without the use of trays. This is good for immediate gratification or for people who are unable or unwilling to wear bleach trays.

The Cons:

Does not bleach as well as custom mouthguard bleaching. If desired results are not obtained either a second bleaching session is required or bleach trays are used to finish the whitening. Due to the stronger materials and conditions necessary to accelerate bleaching, some people are not able to tolerate this procedure. This is the most expensive bleaching method.

Over-the-counter Bleaching

What is it?

Bleaching materials that are available outside of the dental office.

The Pros:

The least expensive way to whiten teeth.

The Cons:

Because there is not a custom fit bleach tray, more bleaching gel is used so there is more likelihood of tooth sensitivity and gum irritation.

The materials will whiten teeth, but are not as strong or effective as those available through your dentist.

Any of these methods will whiten teeth, but none of them will whiten existing dental work such as crowns, veneers, or fillings. Before you proceed with bleaching you should discuss your desired results with your dentist to safely and effectively achieve maximum "whiteness".



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