



Principals

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Tooth Whitening

Vital bleaching is one method utilized to lighten the shade of your teeth. It may be appropriate for you but needs professional assessment to determine this.

How does it work? All forms of bleaching are essentially the same. A bleaching product is applied to the outside of your teeth, which penetrates through the enamel to neutralize the intrinsic stains within the teeth. The bleach needs to be in contact with the teeth for sufficient time at an appropriate concentration in a suitable carrier for it to be safe and effective.

What can it achieve? Vital bleaching of teeth will commonly lighten the teeth by several shades. However, the results are variable and it is difficult to predict the degree of lightening that can be achieved. It tends to work better with the yellow/brown internal staining than the grey stains. Fillings, crowns and other restorations will not change so if these are visible they may not match and may need to be replaced after whitening your teeth. The improvement is less marked on teeth already light as judged by our tooth shade guides and we generally will not recommend bleaching these teeth.

What are your options? Whitening toothpastes and the like tend not to have sufficient concentration of bleach or sufficient contact time with the teeth to be effective. They also contain harsh abrasives to remove surface stains but they often also wear the teeth leading to tooth sensitivity. Hence we do not generally recommend the whitening toothpastes.

Professionally applied bleach can be delivered in two ways, either via bleach in custom fitted trays applied by yourself at home or via direct application to the teeth by your dentist, often utilizing heat or light. Studies have shown that these two techniques are effective to the same degree one week following the end of treatment. Professional in surgery bleaching can often appear to provide an instant result but this is partly due to dehydration of the teeth caused by having the teeth exposed to the air and bleach for up to an hour and a half. In surgery bleaching generally costs more than twice the fee of custom tray home bleaching because of the considerable dentist time required. Here at Blackburn Dental Group we utilize the custom tray home bleaching system.

What are the risks or side-effects? Bleaching of teeth has a history of more than 20 years and many millions of people around the world have used it. The side-effects have been few and slight. The most common side-effect is the development of sensitivity of the teeth. This usually stops upon ceasing to use the bleach and has largely disappeared with the latest generation of materials. Some cannot tolerate the custom trays or the impressions required to make them. Occasionally some will develop a mild irritation of the gums, especially if they leave excess material at the gum margin. Adhering to our instructions should avoid this. Bleaching over the period of time we recommend has no long term detrimental effect on the tooth strength or structure.

What do you do next? If you wish to proceed with vital bleaching of your teeth you need to organize a 30 minute appointment with one of our hygienists. She will assess you for the appropriateness of bleaching, then record the shade of your teeth, take photographs and take impressions. Your custom trays will be ready within a week for you to start whitening your teeth.

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