

# Ask the Tooth Doctor

**Q: I am 65 years old with yellow teeth from aging and coffee. Am I a candidate for whitening, and what would be involved?**

**A:** After years of eating, drinking, colored beverages, stress and everyday use, your teeth have lost their luster. Most everyone wants a whiter and brighter smile. According to a recent national survey by the American Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry, 74% of adults feel an unattractive smile can hurt a person's chances for career success, while 96% of adults believe an attractive smile makes a person more appealing to members of the opposite sex. People judge us by our smile, and an attractive smile can take us a long way.

The simplest method for whitening teeth and brightening the smile is bleaching. This can be done at home or in the dental office. The bleaching products purchased "over-the-counter" are typically less effective than products your dentist uses. This is because the strength of the bleach is typically less and the tray or white strip does not adapt around the teeth as well as a

professionally made bleaching tray. At-home whitening takes several days to a few weeks to accomplish the desired effect. The bleaching procedures used in dental offices involve a whitening gel placed over the teeth with a special light or laser used to activate the gel. These are quick, usually an hour or two. The results are immediate and quite attractive.

At-home whitening, supervised by your dentist, with professionally made custom trays and professional strength whitening gel, is a safe and effective way to whiten your teeth over a period of time. In-office whitening is also safe, effective and quick. Both methods will help you rejuvenate your smile and give you a more youthful appearance.



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