

A Quick Review of Different Ways to Whiten Your Teeth

By Dr. Melanie Rabeni

Tooth whitening has become a very popular dental procedure in recent years as more people realize what an improvement it can make in their smile. This procedure can normally erase years of stains and discoloration on a patient's teeth with a simple and pain-free procedure. Most stains can be eliminated in a few office visits and will leave your smile whiter and help to give your entire appearance a brighter look.

Teeth can become stained over time by your diet, habits like smoking or even certain medications. This staining is a gradual process that takes time to occur and can leave your teeth looking darker than normal. The good news is that the staining only occurs on the surface of your teeth and can be reversed by a cosmetic dental process to restore their original color and luster.

The first thing your dentist will do before any tooth whitening procedure is a complete inspection of your teeth and gums. This is an important first step to ensure that your teeth are all healthy and you don't have any other underlying problems that need to be corrected. This checkup will also give your dentist a chance to compare the relative colors of your teeth to determine how much work whitening may be needed. As teeth become stained, the amount of the change in their color can vary greatly depending on where the tooth is located in your mouth. Your front teeth will typically stain more dramatically since they are exposed frequently to the staining agents in your food and drink. Your other side and back teeth will stain as well, but their shade will be lighter in comparison. Making sure that all of your teeth approach a lighter color together will guarantee you have a brighter smile that is consistent throughout your mouth.

There are a number of ways your dentist can whiten your teeth and the most popular methods involve a bleaching solution. This specialized gel is typically applied to the surface of your teeth and left there for a period of time to naturally remove these stains. A slightly more intense method combines this gel with a bright ultraviolet light to increase the effectiveness of the gel solution. Both of these treatments can be done in your dentist's office and will leave your smile looking significantly brighter in a single visit. Depending on how extensive the stains are on your teeth, you might need a follow-up to remove any deep-set stains.

In addition to having your teeth whitened at the dentist office, there are other solutions you can use at home. Your dentist may offer a program where they will prepare a custom mold for your teeth that you can use to apply a gentler version of the whitening gel at home. This allows you to slowly whiten your

teeth on your own when you have the time. The home method typically uses a less potent mixture of the gel that may take a little longer to achieve the results you want than the with office procedure. The advantage to this type of tooth whitening is that you can simply use it again in the future as your teeth become stained.

Dr. Melanie Rabeni owns Rabeni Dental in Plymouth, MA. For the latest information on how to create a beautiful smile through cosmetic dentistry, visit www.rabenidental.com

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