

This information sheet gives you an overview of the home tooth whitening procedure which involves whitening trays and whitening gel.

How long should you wear the trays for?

This depends upon the amount of lightening that you desire and the original shade of the teeth. If your teeth are quite dark or very yellow/grey/tetracycline stained it will take longer to whiten the teeth. If you are not experiencing any sensitivity you may wear the trays for at least 1 to 2 hours or even sleep with the trays in the mouth. Ideally wearing the trays overnight gives more reliable results. It is important to remove all the excess material around the trays on the gums and the palate prior to sleeping with the trays. The darker the teeth, the longer your teeth will take to get lighter. Tetracycline stained teeth can take from 6 months to a year to get lighter. Some teeth can whiten within the first month. If you cannot wear the trays for a few days because of your hectic schedule, it does not matter. Whiten your teeth according to your own schedule. Some people put trays in after dinner and wear them for the first hour while watching television or doing the dishes. Then if everything is fine, replenish the trays and sleep with them in the mouth.

What do I do if I have sensitivity?

Sensitivity of the teeth is the most common side effect of home whitening treatment. In fact, many patients suffer from sensitivity anyway. This occurs usually around the necks of the teeth where gums have receded. If you are experiencing any sensitivity you should stop whitening your teeth for a few days. You can resume the whitening after about 3 to 4 days. If the teeth become ultra-sensitive, you can place sensitive tooth-paste into the whitening trays for an hour a day. This will usually stop the sensitivity. Alternatively, you can rub the sensitivity tooth-paste into the gum margins with your finger 5 times a day for a few days. If you are concerned, please call the dentist.

What happens when teeth do not bleach evenly?

If the teeth have white spots on them before whitening, these spots will appear whiter during the first few days, however the contrast between the spots and the teeth will become less and eventually they will not be noticeable. You may notice new white spots occurring on the teeth while you are undertaking tooth whitening treatment. These white spots are already present on the teeth before whitening. As the teeth become lighter these spots will become more visible. **DO NOT WORRY.** As the whole tooth, itself becomes lighter these spots will eventually fade. You may notice these white spots immediately after the whitening session or in the morning if you have been wearing the trays for the whole night. Some teeth appear banded with lighter/whiter areas. Again, these banding are originally present on the tooth. As the tooth is dark these bandings are not obvious. As the tooth becomes lighter, the lighter parts of the tooth will lighten first followed by the darker banded area. After a week or so these will not be noticeable anymore.

How will my teeth feel?

Normally the teeth feel clean after the whitening procedure. The whitening materials also have an indirect effect on the gums in helping them to heal or improving the health of the gums. This is how the technique was invented as it was first used to heal gum irritation during orthodontic treatment. What about my smile? Your smile will appear brighter as a bonus. It is rare, but sometimes the teeth do not lighten at all. If this happens and you are wearing the whitening trays as recommended, you may need to try a different whitening product or a slightly higher concentration of whitening gel. You can discuss this with me. If you have white fillings in the front teeth that match the existing shade of your teeth before you whiten the teeth, they may not match the teeth afterwards. This is

because your teeth can lighten, but the fillings do not lighten. When the desired colour has been achieved, we can replace these fillings with lighter shade of filling materials to match the new shade of the teeth. Normally we would wait for at least 3 weeks before replacing the fillings.

How long does the whitening treatment last?

Will I have to whiten my teeth again? Normally the new white colour of your teeth keeps quite well. The effect is dependent on what has caused the teeth to discolour in the first place. If you drink a lot of coffee, red wine, cola drinks the effect may darken slightly. Some patients do a top up treatment after 3 to 4 years. Some patients do not need to. You can choose to top up every 12 months using the same trays, the extra gel tubes will cost you about £10.

Does whitening harm the teeth and the gums?

Safety studies have shown that whitening teeth using dentist prescribed home whitening technique is perfectly safe on the teeth, cheeks, gum, and tissues around the mouth. Whitening the teeth with dentist prescribed kits is equivalent to drinking one canned soda drink. The whitening material has ph. which is neutral. There are problems with whitening kits that are purchased over the counter. Although they are inexpensive, they normally contain an acid rinse, which can damage the teeth or thin down the enamel of the teeth. This acid rinse is quite harmful to the teeth. There are many cases where patients purchased whitening kits over the counter and bleached their teeth. This was because the acid rinse had worn the enamel away and darker shade of the dentine was exposed which made the teeth look darker. It is advisable not to bleach your teeth if you smoke heavily. It is best to stop smoking for at least 3 weeks before commencing the whitening procedure. Smoking causes the teeth to go darker anyway and the effect will be diminished. But you can still enjoy a sparkling smile with whitening treatments. The technique of whitening teeth is not for everyone. There are some situations where whitening teeth is contraindicated such as where the front teeth are already crowned or have big fillings, or the teeth are excessively worn and there is tooth surface loss. The most ideal situation will be where there is not much wrong with the teeth except for the colour which has become more yellow with age.

How much does it cost?

Tooth whitening will cost in total £300. This includes upper and lower custom-made trays, 2-week supply of whitening gel, pre-and post-operative photography.