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BLEACHING

Whitening of teeth is a cosmetic service we provide for our patients. Bleaching is a popular way to whiten teeth and can dramatically change a patient's physical appearance. While at home the patient wears a custom-made bleaching tray that holds the bleaching gel against the teeth. Almost always bleaching procedures are less invasive and less expensive than other aesthetic procedures such as crowns and veneers.

How well bleaching works -- that is, the appropriateness of bleaching for any given patient -- will depend in large part on the discolouration itself, its cause, and the length of time the discolouring agent has permeated the structure of the tooth. The success of the response of the bleaching technique is directly related to the expectations of the patient. Apparent tooth colour change is usually noticed after the first three days and the bleaching procedure is carried out for two to three weeks.

Repeat applications over time will be required. Patients who are conscientious about avoiding staining foods and habits will usually require a touch-up bleaching procedure in two to three years. The agents that originally caused the discoloration will continue to discolour the teeth. Patients who continue to smoke or who consume large amounts of tea, coffee or colas are likely to need retreatment every six months. Brushing after consuming coffee and tea, and avoiding tobacco will help prevent additional staining and will prolong your bleaching results. Proper home maintenance -- brushing and flossing -- and regular dental check-ups are necessary for bright smiles.

Some patients experience temporary heightened sensitivity to cold. If there is any sensitivity, it is usually felt in the front teeth. The bleaching procedure would then be delayed for a day or two and aspirin or a similar analgesic may be recommended. Occasionally the gums around the teeth may blanche but this resolves without lasting effects. There may be some initial white spots as a result of the bleaching treatment.

Among the contraindications to bleaching are: Exposed or near exposed dentine, deteriorated or leaking restoration margins, patients prone to sensitivity, and enlarged dental pulps. A consultation examination will reveal whether any of these contraindications are present and whether bleaching is appropriate. Alternatives to bleaching include direct bonded veneers, porcelain veneers, and porcelain crowns.

The take-home bleaching procedure (code 97123 for both arches) is **not** covered by most insurance plans since it is a cosmetic procedure. **The cost for the take-home bleaching procedure is \$400.** This includes an examination, upper and lower bleaching trays, and a supply of bleaching gel.

We supply touch up bleaching kits with a 9-day application at cost, \$65. Keep your bleaching trays in a safe place for future use.



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A PATIENT GUIDE FOR TAKE-HOME TOOTH BLEACHING

Step 1: Loading the Bleaching Tray

Remove the protective twist cap and place the auto-mixing tip on the syringe. After application, retract the plunger slightly so no gel oozes from the tip. Store the gel syringes at room temperature, away from light. Start at one end of the tray and apply a small bead of gel against the front part of each tooth of the bleaching tray. When the loaded tray is inserted over your teeth, very little excess gel should ooze past the edge of the tray. Do not overload the trays. To avoid any irritation to your gums, wipe away the excess gel with a tissue.

Step 2: Wearing the Bleaching Tray

Brush your teeth and rinse well with warm water so no food particles remain. Keep the tray seated firmly around your teeth. **Wear the trays for at least 30 minutes but no longer than one hour.** Do not eat, drink, or grind your teeth while wearing the bleaching tray. Avoid food and drink for one hour after tray removal. Sensitivity to hot and cold is usually most noticeable for several hours after the tray is removed. If there is significant sensitivity to hot or cold, call the dental office. We may recommend limiting tray wear to only one hour per day or skipping a day of wear.

Step 3: Cleanup

Remove the tray. Remove the remaining gel from your teeth by brushing, flossing and rinsing with warm water. Rinse the tray with cold water and clean it with a toothbrush. Store the gel syringes in a dark place at room temperature. After removing the tray, avoid foods that stain your teeth such as coffee, tea, cola, and red wine and avoid tobacco use.

Step 4: Follow-Up

Repeat applications over time will be required. Your habits and oral hygiene will affect your results. Avoiding coffee, tea, and tobacco will help prevent additional staining and will prolong your bleaching results. Brushing immediately after using or consuming items that darken teeth will help keep stains from penetrating your tooth enamel. Proper home maintenance -- brushing and flossing -- and regular dental check-ups are necessary for bright smiles.

Routine Bleaching Tray Wear Schedule

The bleaching trays are worn **one hour per day**. They can be worn whatever time in the day is most convenient; most people wear them in the evening after dinner before bed. If there is gum irritation, call the dental office: You are probably applying too much gel but call the office because your tray may need adjusting.

Your Zoom DayWhite kit includes enough bleaching gel for 2 weeks. There are 12 notches on each syringe. Each notch is more than enough for a full arch – upper or lower. So one syringe will last for 6 days if you are loading two trays each once per day. Using less than one dose per tray is preferable to using too much gel. The 6 supplied syringes should last for 18 applications.