

Bleaching (Whitening) Teeth Outside the Dental Office

Bleaching should be accomplished before doing any fillings, crowns, bridges, or partial dentures since those items will not whiten. Please advise us if you want to lighten your teeth before treatment begins.

Hydrogen peroxide or Carbamide Peroxide has been used successfully for many years to lighten the color of teeth. Originally, it was applied only by dentists. Now, patients may also apply bleaching gels to their teeth at home. Although tooth bleaching compounds can be purchased by patients in pharmacies or grocery stores, the most effective bleaching techniques may be obtained from dentists. It is preferable for dentists to supervise bleaching. If bleaching is not supervised, crowns and fillings present in your mouth may not match natural tooth structure after bleaching. Bleaching teeth with peroxide in custom-fitted trays outside the dental office is the most popular method to achieve whitening of teeth.

POTENTIAL SIDE EFFECTS:

1. **Tooth Sensitivity:** This condition can be minimized if bleaching times are reduced, or it is eliminated if bleaching is discontinued for a few days. Post-bleaching application of fluoride as described below reduces sensitivity.
2. **Gum Tenderness:** Occasionally, gum tissues become irritated, and sometimes a mild sloughing of the superficial layers of the gums occurs. Reduction of bleaching time or elimination of bleach stops the sloughing.

PATIENT INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Brush and floss your teeth. Rinse your mouth well.
2. Place a small amount of bleaching gel into each tooth space in the provided trays for every tooth to be lightened.
3. Insert the trays into your mouth over the teeth, wipe the excess gel off the gum tissue with your finger or a toothbrush, expectorate (spit out) the excess gel and foam, and keep the loaded trays in your mouth for at least 1 hour.
4. If you desire to accelerate the bleach, remove the trays, wash the gel out, dry the trays with tissue paper, reload the trays, and replace them into your mouth for another hour.
5. If you are experiencing tooth sensitivity during bleaching, after completing the bleaching procedure, place several drops of 1.1% neutral sodium fluoride gel into washed and dried trays and place the trays into your mouth for 5 minutes. A prescription provided by your dentist is needed to buy this gel at the pharmacy. This will help lessen sensitivity. Some brands of bleach may have desensitizing chemicals already in them. Ask your dentist.
6. Rinse the trays with tap water after use, and tip them upside down to allow them to dry before the next use.
7. Discontinue bleaching if tooth sensitivity, gum irritation, or any other negative event occurs. Notify us of the problem immediately, and we will advise you.

You have observed, and we have recorded the color of your teeth at the initiation of bleaching. We will monitor the color changes with you and will advise you when the desired color change is obtained. The average time for optimum color change to occur is 1–3 weeks. Brown, orange, and yellow stains bleach faster and easier than blue or gray stains. Observation appointments may be necessary every 7–10 days to check the progress of the bleaching. As frequently as once per year, a few additional touch-up bleaching sessions may be needed at home. We will advise you of this need at your regular check-up appointments.

PATIENT INSTRUCTIONS (ACCELERATED BLEACHING SEQUENCE):

If you want to bleach your teeth faster, you may apply bleaching gel more than 2 hours per day. Any convenient time during the day is acceptable. Of course, increased bleaching time may cause more side effects. Ask us about increased bleaching time if you want a faster bleach.

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