

Teeth Whitening

Many teeth whitening systems are available, including whitening toothpastes, over-the counter gels, strips and trays, and whitening agents obtained from a dentist.

Teeth whitening is ideal for people who have healthy, unrestored teeth (no fillings) and gums. Individuals with yellow tones to their teeth respond best. But this cosmetic procedure is not recommended for everyone.

Find out if teeth whitening is right for you.

Whitening Systems

Whitening Toothpastes

All toothpastes help remove surface stains because they have mild abrasives. Some whitening toothpastes contain gentle polishing or chemical agents that provide additional stain removal effectiveness. Whitening toothpastes can help remove surface stains only and do not contain bleach; over-the-counter and professional whitening products contain hydrogen peroxide (a bleaching substance) that helps remove stains on the tooth surface as well as stains deep in the tooth.

Whitening toothpastes can lighten your tooth's color by about one shade. In contrast, light-activated whitening conducted in your dentist's office (see below) can make your teeth three to eight shades lighter.

Over-the-Counter Whitening Strips and Gels

Whitening gels are clear, peroxide-based gels applied with a small brush directly to the surface of your teeth. Instructions generally call for twice a day application for 14 days. Initial results are seen in a few days and final results are sustained for about 4 months. The retail cost for this product is about \$15 for a 14-day treatment. Whitening strips are very thin, virtually invisible strips that are coated with a peroxide-based whitening gel. The strips are applied twice daily for 30 minutes for 14 days. Initial results are seen in a few days and final results are sustained for about 4 months. The retail cost for this product ranges from \$10 to \$55 for a 14-day treatment.

In-Office Whitening

In-office bleaching provides the quickest and most effective way to whiten teeth. With in-office bleaching, the whitening product is applied directly to the teeth. These products can be used in combination with heat, a special light, and/or a laser. The light and/or heat accelerate the whitening process. Results are seen in only 1, 30- to 60-minute treatment. But, to achieve dramatic results, several appointments are usually needed. However, with laser-enhanced bleaching, dramatic results can be seen after the first treatment.