

Teeth Whitening Fact Sheet



Teeth Whitening: Do your research know the facts

Chairman of the Australian Dental Association's (ADA) Oral Health Committee, Dr Peter Alldritt, said the number of Australians whitening or bleaching their teeth, is steadily rising, yet most people have little knowledge about the potential safety risks surrounding the various whitening treatments.

Whitening your teeth can cause side effects such as heightened tooth sensitivity, gum problems and uneven coloured teeth, and some of these changes can be irreversible.

To prevent damage, people considering having their teeth whitened should consult their dentist to ensure their teeth are suitable for whitening. Having your teeth whitened by anyone other than a dentist is risky – these individuals lack knowledge and training when it comes to your teeth and that increases the likelihood that you may suffer permanent damage to your teeth and mouth.

Frequently Asked Questions:

How do I know if teeth whitening is right for me? When choosing to whiten your teeth using bleaching agents, you need to determine if your teeth are suitable for whitening. Only a registered dentist can competently assess your suitability for the treatment.

What does a dentist look for when assessing my teeth for whitening? A dentist will look for grey or yellow discolouration, the cause of

discolouration, presence of restorations such as fillings, crowns and veneers, gum recession and tooth sensitivity.

Will a whitening treatment turn my fillings or crowns white too? No, the whitening procedure will have no impact on the colour of existing fillings, crowns and veneers.

What will I feel during and after the procedure? Some people notice a “bubbly” sensation on the surface of their teeth, or periods of sharp pain inside a tooth while the bleaching agent is in contact with their teeth. Others notice an achy feeling in their teeth for a few days following the treatment and temporarily heightened sensitivity when biting into certain foods and consuming cold beverages. You should report any painful sensations to your dentist.

Are there any long term or irreversible side-effects associated with teeth whitening? Poor assessment of your teeth and their suitability for whitening can lead to disappointing results. Damage can include severe tooth sensitivity and irritated gums, which may require dental treatment.

The effect of hydrogen peroxide on teeth enamel is irreversible, so if your teeth react badly to the treatment, they can never go back to the way they were. Bleaching agents can also cause gum damage and inflammation, and alteration of the enamel surface, as well as chemical burns and blistering of the

tissues in your mouth. This is why you should only ever consult a dentist to whiten your teeth.

How can I whiten my teeth naturally? The best way to keep a healthy and white smile is to maintain good oral hygiene. For healthier and whiter looking teeth, you should brush twice a day for two minutes using a fluoride toothpaste, floss daily, chew sugar free gum if advised by your dentist, don't smoke and maintain a sensible diet, limiting consumption of tea and coffee, red wine and spicy food.

Before you consider a teeth whitening treatment, review this quick checklist:

- Have you tried other ways to whiten your teeth without a chemical treatment, like having a professional scale and clean by your dentist and maintaining good oral hygiene habits?
- Have you consulted your dentist and had your teeth assessed for suitability?
- Has your dentist, in their professional opinion, recommended the treatment?
- Are you aware of the side effects associated with tooth whitening?

