Pre Operative Instructions: Tooth Whitening

History:

Eighty plus years ago during WW1, soldiers in the trenches were given a hydrogen peroxide mouth rinse to treat ‘Trench Mouth’ or ‘Gum Disease’. The discovery was then made, not only did the peroxide treat the gum disease, it whitened the teeth as well.

At present, ‘Bleaching’ or ‘Whitening’ teeth is a hot topic in both the print and electronic media. At Complete Dental Care, we have been whitening teeth for over ten years and have closely followed and monitored all trends and systems across the world during this period.

From our experience, and our policy of not “experimenting” on our own patients, we believe we have the safest, fastest bleaching systems in the market place. To help you decide on whether bleaching is for you, I trust you will find this information sheet useful.

What stains teeth?

Over time, we find our teeth colour change due to diet and ageing factors. As we age, we find that tea, coffee, nicotine, red wine and cola darken the teeth. The thinning of the enamel also makes the teeth appear more yellow. These are the types of stains that respond extremely well to whitening techniques.

Using a peroxide-based solution to literally lift the dark stains out of the enamel prisms performs whitening of ones natural teeth. This is done, we believe, by the bubbling effect of the oxygen released from the peroxide solution. The whitening process is a passive process unlike some “off the shelf” whitening systems that can be extremely abrasive to the enamel.

Application of whitening agent to teeth:

There are two ways to apply the whitening agent to your teeth.

1). ZOOM In surgery power whitening hydrogen peroxide activated by an ultraviolet light.
2). Custom made whitening trays/ mouthguards (made on plaster models of your teeth) used at home.

In our experience, we find that Zoom 1 hour in chair whitening and the use of an at home ‘touch up kit’ utilising hydrogen peroxide for 30-60 minutes 7 – 10 days post treatment achieves the brightest, most consistent result.

The home whitening kit alone can achieve results approaching Zoom over a 1-3 week period of daily treatment.

Through our experience we find once the critical 1-2 weeks of treatment is completed a ‘touch-up’ of 1-3 days every 6-12 months is ample treatment to maintain your white/bright smile. We also find the custom made whitening trays can be worn to prevent wear of teeth in-patients who grind their teeth at night. Fluoride or ‘Tooth Mousse’ can also be placed in the trays if remineralising and strengthening enamel is required.

Cautions:

All patients prior to whitening should note the following cautions.

1). Patients with hypersensitive teeth may not be able to tolerate the cleaning/bubbling action of the bleach. Pre-treatment with “Tooth Mousse” is sometimes required.
2). Two – five percent of all patients experience some degree of cold sensitivity during whitening, this is reversible. Whitening every second day or reducing the whitening time per day can control such sensitivity. “Tooth Mousse” also successfully manages this sensitivity.
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3). Old fillings, crowns and laminates will not change colour.

4). Undiagnosed dental decay or other undiagnosed oral problems may react to the whitening process. It is therefore essential a full examination be carried out prior to any whitening treatment.

5). The colour stability post treatment depends on the intake of substances that cause staining of the teeth previously listed.

6). Occasionally (unpredictably) ZOOM or at home whitening can initially create a “blotchy or marble effect” upon close inspection. This effect usually settles within one week. The use of a home kit with more whitening solution or “Tooth Mousse” will even out colour discrepancies.

7). We advise patients to only whiten in short bursts as we have no long term data on the effect of constant whitening on the teeth and gums.

Advantages

1) Whitening is ideal for undamaged teeth that only need lightening in colour.

2) Custom made trays enable you to bleach at home and touch up 6-12 monthly in short bursts.

3) The upper and lower teeth can be whitened.

4) Approved tooth whitening products are safe to use.

Disadvantages

1) Whitening works best for the teeth that are stained yellow, brown and orange. Teeth with grey stains may lighten a little, but results will not be as good.

2) Crowns and Laminates will not change colour.

3) Old fillings may need to be replaced after whitening.

4) 2%-5% of all patients experience some degree of cold sensitivity during whitening, this is reversible. Whitening every second day, reducing the time of whitening and using “Tooth Mousse” successfully manages this sensitivity.

After ten years experience, we can safely pass this message on to our patients, “In this day and age short bursts of a vital whitening treatment can be performed safely, without damaging the teeth or soft tissues and achieve very pleasing outcomes resulting in a whiter, brighter, younger, healthier smile”.

If you have any further queries, please feel free to contact Helen Beamish on 03 9866 1171.