



INMAN PARK DENTISTRY

DOCTORS *of* DENTAL MEDICINE

Beautiful dentistry, comfortably done.®

Tooth Whitening “Bleaching”

We all want whiter teeth, and tooth-whitening is easy to do. This brochure discusses what works, what doesn't, and how to maintain the brightness of your smile.



Does it work? ✓

YES! Tooth whitening products containing a peroxide-based active ingredient are very effective at whitening your teeth. There are a variety of products, both over-the-counter (OTC) and prescription-based (from your dentist) that do an excellent job of tooth whitening.

Do I Need To Whiten? ✓

That depends... teeth do not have to be bright white to be healthy. A certain amount of staining and discoloration over time is normal and natural. But if the cumulative effects of coffee, tea, wine, and bad habits like tobacco use have darkened your teeth, then whitening can really help you regain confidence in your smile. So if you think you want your teeth whiter, then do it. But remember, whitening will not change the color of crowns, veneers, or fillings.

Is It Safe? ✓

You should never do tooth whitening while you have an untreated cavity or with active signs of gum disease. But for everyone else, tooth whitening is safe for your teeth and gums, although there can be short term side effects:

Tooth Sensitivity - The most common side effect of tooth whitening is a temporary increase in tooth sensitivity. The amount of sensitivity can increase with the strength and speed of the whitening product, and can be severe. For people with extremely sensitive teeth, we advise using a sensitivity toothpaste (e.g. Sensodyne®) every time you brush for two weeks *prior* to doing any tooth whitening, and to use less intense whitening methods.

Gum Irritation - Some whitening methods, especially the intense, one-visit procedure, can irritate the gums and in some cases cause mild chemical burns lasting 1-2 days. Although every precaution is taken to avoid such an outcome, it can still happen.

For both sensitivity and gum irritation, OTC pain medication (Tylenol®, Aleve®, Motrin®) for a few days is usually all that is needed. Rarely, prescription pain medication may be needed if the discomfort is more than mild.

Ways to Whiten Your Teeth:

Over The Counter (OTC) Methods

Cheap and easy, but do they work?

White Strips - These are like little strips of tape loaded with whitening gel that you apply to your teeth daily for 2-3 weeks. They work, are relatively inexpensive, but do not whiten your back teeth and can be hard to use for some people.

Generic Whitening Trays - These are “one size fits all” trays that are designed to cover your teeth and therefore deliver more whitening gel to each tooth. These are similar to what we use in the office, but not as strong and fit poorly.

Peroxide Mouthwashes - Barely effective, and require 3-4 months of regular use to show decent results. There are better ways to whiten than mouthwash.

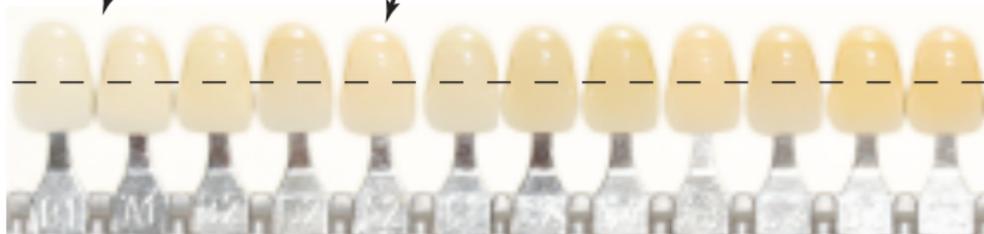
Whitening Toothpastes - Only remove external staining and **DO NOT ACTUALLY WHITEN YOUR TEETH!** Read the fine print of your whitening toothpaste and you'll notice it says “removes surface stains”. That means it is simply more abrasive than your average toothpaste. That might be good for removing coffee stains, but won't actually make the tooth a brighter color. For many people, that extra abrasiveness causes more harm than good over the years, leading to worn enamel, receding gums, and tooth sensitivity.

What color are your teeth?

(fold along the dotted line to check your tooth color in the mirror)

Average whitening result

Average tooth color



Dentist Prescribed Methods

There two tooth whitening treatments we offer are below:



Home Use Custom Trays - The “Gold Standard” of whitening treatment for decades, these custom made trays fit your teeth perfectly. They deliver the gel to every nook and cranny of your teeth without being bulky. This method offers you the greatest control over your teeth whitening and can lead to the best long-term results. See the section on *How to use your whitening trays* on the back of this brochure for more details.

Our Most Popular!

One-Visit Whitening

Our fastest method for whitening your teeth, just a single 2-hour appointment completes 90% of the whitening in that one visit. This method includes a free set of custom trays so you can continue whitening at home if desired, as well as for future touch-ups.



CAUTION - One-Visit Whitening uses extremely strong peroxide gel and is not advised for people with sensitive teeth or gums. Although your gums are isolated from the gel using cotton and other barriers, some people still experience side effects. See the *Is It Safe?* section of this brochure for more information.

Custom Whitening Trays

Custom made whitening trays are the best way to whiten your teeth. They provide the most thorough coverage, keep the gel on your teeth (and off your gums), are the most comfortable, and give you the most control over the whitening process. Impressions of both your upper and lower teeth is all that is necessary to have custom-fitted whitening trays made for you.

How to use your whitening trays:

- Brush and floss your teeth before using your trays.
- Place a *small* dab of whitening gel inside the trays against the front edge of each tooth that you want to whiten.



- Place the trays in your mouth, they should fit snugly and fully over your teeth. Wipe off any excess gel that extrudes out from under the tray (next time, put a little less gel in those areas where the excess squeezed out).
- Leave the trays in for 1-3 hours. You may leave the trays in longer (e.g. overnight), but after 3 hours the effectiveness of the gel is gone.
- Repeat the process daily for 1-3 weeks. Most people will see results within a few treatments, but it can take weeks to get the maximum whitening. For “touch-ups” every six months or so, a few days of use may be all you need.
- Use soap and COLD water to clean your trays. Hot water may distort the trays and make them fit loosely.

- Store the trays in a safe place. Do not leave the trays in your car on a hot day, as they will distort from the heat. Do not leave them where your dog can find them (you would not believe how often people say their dog chewed up their trays)!
- Whitening trays can last 3-5 years. However, they do eventually wear out or can get stained over time. If they feel loose or are heavily stained, it may be time for new trays.
- Store your unused whitening gel in the refrigerator to extend its shelf-life. If you run out, you can always buy more gel from us.
- People with certain types of stains may need to keep bleaching for several months, especially those with teeth darkened from “tetracycline” staining.
- Tooth sensitivity is common, but temporary. If it is bothersome, then bleach every second or third day, instead of daily. You can also load your trays with sensitivity toothpaste as a 20-minute pretreatment every time you whiten. For severe and persistent sensitivity, please call us for an evaluation.

Whitening Tray Warranty

All of our whitening trays are custom made in-house, and come with a one-year warranty. If during that first year your trays loosen, tear, or you wear through them, we will make you a new set of trays at no charge. However, we will not replace your whitening trays for free if they are lost, damaged, or because you feel the results are less than expected.