

AT HOME VITAL TOOTH BLEACHING

About the proposed treatment

Vital tooth bleaching, when done at home is basically a safe and effective means of whitening your teeth. How well the patient follows the directions determines the safety and success of this procedure. The success also is directly related to the darkness of the teeth, the cause of coloration and the anticipated results. Because all these things are so variable from patient to patient, the results cannot be guaranteed. The patient should not expect their teeth to be absolutely white as this is not only impossible but also unnatural looking.

This procedure involves bleaching your teeth for one hour every day with custom trays. These trays are made from molds of your teeth taken in the dental office. One or more follow-up visits are made to check progress and effectiveness. Most of the work then is done by the patient at home. This therefore requires patients to take responsibility for the procedure's effectiveness and safety.

Once the treatment is completed, the color should stay stable indefinitely. Of course, if patients continue to drink coffee or cola drinks, smoke, etc., the color will not be stable and periodic bleaching sessions may be required to maintain the desired shade. There appears to be no serious side effects to such long term bleaching.

Benefits and alternatives

At home bleaching is intended to whiten your teeth in the most gentle and inexpensive way. In-office bleaching requires stronger solutions, heat or intense light, and more office time. This may result in more undesirable side effects, time involved, and increased costs. Alternatives to bleaching include covering the teeth with whiter resins or plastics which may need to be replaced and/or repaired periodically. Another alternative is porcelain veneers which involve some tooth structure removal (drilling). The last alternative is to crown or cap the teeth. All these more costly options were fairly common before bleaching techniques were perfected.

Common Risks

1. Sensitivity: During and after treatment you may experience sensitivity to cold and/or heat. Usually it is slight and only lasts for the first few days. There have been rare cases where the sensitivity lasts for several months. In cases where the sensitivity lasts more than a few days, the treatment is halted and alternative solutions may be used.
2. Stiff or sore jaw joint: You may have temporary stiffness or jaw joint soreness from wearing the mouth trays during the hour of treatment. This usually diminishes as the treatment progresses.
3. Upset stomach, nausea, bad taste: During treatment, if too much gel has been placed into the trays, you may swallow and taste the gel. Though the gel is harmless to swallow in small amounts, large amounts may cause upset stomach and/or nausea. Using less gel will solve this problem. Some patients find the taste of the gel to be undesirable. This problem may be alleviated by switching gel formulas or decreasing the amount placed in the trays.

4. Sore gums: During treatment, the bleaching gel may cause soreness to the gums as well as a whitening of the gums. This usually resolves itself after several days of bleaching. Should it continue, the gel may be changed or the bleaching treatment will be halted.

5. Tooth pain: Since neither the bleaching gel nor the trays damage healthy teeth and gums, any pain experienced indicates possible problems with the teeth. This may include untreated cavities, exposed root surfaces, gum disease, infections of the teeth and gums, ulcerations of the gums, and/or damaged tooth structure. These problems need to be addressed if the bleaching treatment is to be continued.

6. Need for further treatment: Since every patient's teeth are different in color as well as the cause for discoloration, results are impossible to predict. If the discoloration cannot be removed to the patient's satisfaction, additional treatment such as in-office bleaching or restorations may be required.

Consequences of not performing treatment

Teeth bleaching is totally elective and is not necessary for the continued health and welfare of your teeth. It is purely cosmetic and as such, there are no negative consequences of not performing this treatment.

Every reasonable effort will be made to ensure that your condition is treated properly, although it is not possible to guarantee perfect results. By signing below, you acknowledge that you have received adequate information about the proposed treatment, that you understand this information and that all of your questions have been answered fully.

I give my consent for the proposed treatment as described above.

I refuse to give my consent for the proposed treatment as described above. I have been informed of the potential consequences of my decision to refuse treatment.

_____ Patient's last name	_____ Patient's first name	_____ Patient's ID#
_____ Patient's signature		_____ Date
_____ Dentist's signature		_____ Date
_____ Witness's signature	_____ Witness's name	_____ Date