

FLASH THOSE Pearly Whites

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STUDIES SHOW THAT THE VERY FIRST THING

people notice when meeting someone is their smile. Therefore, it's no surprise that people are always looking for ways to improve their pearly whites. One

of the most frequent questions I hear from patients is, "How can I make my teeth whiter?" There are several options to brighten your smile, depending on your current dental state.

If you feel your teeth are already fairly light, but you would still love to brighten them up occasionally, then over-the-counter type products may be all you need. There are several types and brands of over-the-counter whitening strips and gels. They're typically not as strong as the professional options you can receive from your dentist, but they can really work well for getting rid of mild stain to help maintain a brighter smile.

If you tend to drink things that are very staining such as coffee, tea, dark sodas and red wine, you may choose a stronger option. Your dentist can make custom whitening trays, and provide you with a professional-strength solution to help you achieve the brighter results you desire.

If you currently have a lot of dental restorations, particularly on your front teeth, additional work may be involved to create the smile you desire. Any restorative materials that are present,

whether they're fillings or crowns, will not change in shade with the use of whitening products. You may need to have some restorations replaced after whitening to match your new brighter shade. An additional option for people who have had extensive dental work done on their front teeth, is to restore their teeth with either veneers or crowns. These are porcelain restorations that get permanently cemented to the teeth.

Another question I often hear is, "Do whitening toothpastes really work?" Whitening toothpastes do not contain any whitening agent. They're designed to help break up surface stain a little more effectively than regular toothpastes, which is how they can claim they are "whitening." They will not change the actual shade of your enamel. However, if you're a smoker or a person who consumes lots of highly staining beverages, you may find a whitening paste to be a good adjunct to your tooth-whitening regimen.

Whichever option you choose, always remember it's very important not to exceed the recommended treatment time and dosage. You risk doing permanent damage to your enamel should you choose to overuse the product. We also do not recommend using any whitening agents on patients any younger than 15 years old. Lastly, always make sure you're getting your whitening products from a reputable source, so you know they're safe for your teeth.

Dr. Kate Gilson

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