

Teeth Whitening

Who is teeth whitening for?

When it comes to the appearance of their teeth, probably the most common concern patients have is how white they are. Teeth can become discolored for many reasons, be it staining from diet or smoking, discoloration from medication, or just from wear and tear on the enamel, allowing more of the yellow color of the inner layers of the tooth to show through.

Tooth whitening is a non-invasive dental procedure in which a bleaching agent is used to lift and remove darker-stained debris from the surface of the tooth enamel, enhancing the look of your smile by making it a lighter shade.

It is important to note that tooth whitening will only work with natural tooth enamel, so any crowns, onlays, or composite fillings will need to be considered (and possibly replaced) when deciding on whitening your teeth.

Additionally, teeth whitening is not permanent, as beverages like coffee, tea, or wine will continue to stain your teeth, making periodic touch-ups necessary to maintain the same level of whiteness.

Whitening Options

Our office offers in-office teeth whitening and take-home custom whitening trays. Ask Dr. Orr or Dr. Wilson about which type of whitening is right for you.

In-Office teeth whitening with Zoom

Consultation

In order to determine if you are a candidate for Zoom teeth whitening, Dr. Orr or Dr. Wilson will first perform a comprehensive dental examination to verify that your teeth and gums are healthy. Determining the cause of your tooth discoloration is an important step in identifying whether or not this treatment method will work for you. Also, any cavities should be taken care of prior to the whitening process; otherwise you may have increased sensitivity.

If you are planning additional cosmetic procedures such as dental veneers or bonding, Dr. Orr or Dr. Wilson may recommend having a whitening treatment first so that your new restorations can be made to match the resulting shade of your teeth.

Teeth whitening treatments are not recommended for women who are pregnant or lactating, or for children under the age of 13. Teeth whitening solution contains a peroxide-type gel (carbamide peroxide), which may also be beneficial to help control gum disease.

Teeth whitening procedure

Before teeth whitening can proceed, it is recommended to have a professional teeth cleaning to prepare your teeth for the treatment. This will remove all surface debris from the enamel, so the darker staining debris in the nooks and crannies of the surface of the enamel will be exposed to the lifting effect of the peroxide.

The in-office whitening process uses a hydrogen peroxide solution in combination with the Advanced Power Chairside Lamp which is used to accelerate the bleaching process. The hydrogen peroxide in the solution breaks down during the procedure, causing oxygen to lift off debris from the surface of the enamel and dentin of the tooth and bleach any stained substances it may encounter. The whitening session will usually take a little more than an hour.

After brief preparation where your lips and gums will be covered, Dr. Orr or Dr. Wilson, or a dental hygienist will apply the whitening gel to your teeth. They will then activate the special lamp which will accelerate the whitening process. This will take approximately 15 minutes. The light produces a small amount of heat and, in some cases, the patient will feel a slight tingling sensation during or after the procedure. This should dissipate shortly afterward.

The process will be repeated a couple of times, for a total of 45 minutes of whitening. Once complete, a fluoride gel will be applied to your teeth which will help reduce tooth sensitivity.

Aftercare

For 24-48 hours after the in-office procedure, you should limit your diet to white or clear foods and liquids. You will be given a list of appropriate foods to eat and drink.

For best results, you should reduce or avoid foods and beverages that are known to cause staining, including coffee, tea, cola, and red wine. We always discourage the use of tobacco products, as they cause teeth staining in addition to their other negative impacts on health.

It's important to maintain a good oral hygiene routine, including brushing and flossing, to help your teeth remain brighter for longer.

Take-home whitening trays

Custom take-home whitening trays are another option for patients looking to brighten their smiles. The process will require two visits with us to complete.

During your first visit, Dr. Orr or Dr. Wilson will examine your teeth for any issues and verify that teeth whitening will work for you. An impression will be taken of your teeth, from which your whitening trays will be created. These trays will be made to perfectly fit your teeth, and your teeth alone.

Once the trays are ready, we will ask you to come back in for your second appointment, where the trays will be checked to ensure they have the proper fit. You will be supplied with a special whitening agent which you will use with the trays, wearing them for either 2-4 hours at a time, usually overnight, once or twice a week, based on how much whitening you need.

Be aware that the whitening solution may cause your teeth to be more sensitive during the time you are using it, but this should go away once you've completed the process. We find that patients who use the whitening gel more than 2-3 times a week are more likely to develop sensitivity. You can use Sensodyne or any desensitizing toothpaste to reduce sensitivity. On the nights when you are NOT using the whitening gel, brush your teeth with the desensitizing toothpaste at bedtime, empty, but DO NOT rinse. Go to bed with a coating of the desensitizing gel on your teeth. That is the most effective and rapid way to avoid or eliminate any sensitivity during this process.

We will also provide you with the necessary care instructions for your trays, and we encourage you to continue regular visits with our office to help maintain your beautiful, whiter smile.