

## **What to expect during your bleaching treatment.**

You have been given a bleaching kit to take home with you together with your bleaching trays. It is essential that you follow the instructions given to you by your dentist and the manufacturer's instructions in wearing the trays and applying the bleaching agent.

### **How long should I wear the trays for?**

This depends on the amount of lightening that you desire and the original shade of your teeth. If your teeth are quite dark or very stained, it will take longer to bleach your teeth. If you are not experiencing any sensitivity you may wear the trays for at least 1-2 hours and even sleep with the trays in your mouth. It is very important to remove all excess material around the gums and palate prior to sleeping with the trays in. If you find that you spit your trays out during the night, go back to wearing your trays whilst you are awake.

The darker your teeth, the longer your teeth will take to get lighter. Tetracycline stained teeth can take 6 months or up to one year bleach. Some teeth can whiten after one month.

If you cannot wear your trays for a few days, it does not matter. Plan your bleaching to fit in with your work/social schedule. Some people put the trays in after dinner and wear them whilst watching TV, ironing, washing up etc.

### **What do I do if I have any sensitivity?**

Sensitivity of teeth is the most common side effect of home bleaching. In fact many people suffer from sensitive teeth anyway. This usually occurs around the necks of the teeth where the gums have receded. If you are experiencing any sensitivity you should stop bleaching for a few days. You can resume after about 3-4 days. If your teeth become ultra sensitive, you can place a sensitive toothpaste into the bleaching trays for an hour per day. That will usually stop the sensitivity. Alternatively you can rub the sensitive tooth paste into the gum margins with your finger 5 times per day for a few days. If you are concerned, please telephone for advice.

### **What happens if my teeth do not bleach evenly?**

If the teeth have white spots on them before bleaching, these spots will appear whiter during the first few days. However, the contrast between the spots and the rest of the teeth will become less as the bleaching continues and eventually they will not be noticeable.

You may notice new white spots occurring on the teeth while you are undertaking the bleaching. These white spots were already present on the teeth before bleaching and as the teeth become lighter they become more visible. Do not worry. As the whole tooth becomes lighter these spots will fade. You may notice these white spots immediately after a bleaching session.

Some teeth may appear banded with lighter/whiter areas. Again these bandings were present before bleaching but were not as noticeable as the tooth was darker. As the tooth becomes lighter, the lighter parts will lighten first followed by the darker banded areas. After a week or so these will not be noticeable any more.

### **How will my teeth feel?**

Normally the teeth feel very clean after the bleaching procedure. The bleaching materials have an indirect effect on the gums in helping them to heal or improving the health of the gums. This is how the technique was invented as it was first used to heal gum irritation during orthodontic treatment.

### **What about my smile?**

Your smile will appear brighter as a bonus. It is very rare but sometimes the teeth do not lighten at all. If this happens and you are wearing the trays as recommended, you may need to try a different bleaching product or a higher concentration of the bleaching gel.

If you have white fillings in the front teeth that match the existing shade of your teeth before bleaching, they may not match afterwards. This is because the teeth can lighten but the fillings cannot change shade. When the desired bleaching has been achieved, these fillings can be replaced with a lighter shade of filling material to match the new shade of your teeth. It is normal to wait at least a week after bleaching has finished before replacing any fillings.

### **How long does the bleaching last? Will I have to bleach my teeth again?**

Normally the new white colour of your teeth keeps quite well. The effect is dependent on what has caused the teeth to discolour in the first place. If you drink lots of red wine, coffee, cola drinks etc the effect may darken slightly. Some patients require a top up treatment after 3-4 years. Some patients do not need to.

You will be asked to return your bleaching trays after the desired shade of lightening has been achieved. This is to ensure that you do not over bleach your teeth.

### **Does bleaching harm the teeth or gums?**

Safety studies have shown that bleaching teeth using the dentist prescribed home bleaching technique is perfectly safe on the teeth, cheeks, gum and tissue of the mouth. Bleaching the teeth with the dentist prescribed kit is equivalent to drinking one soda drink. The bleaching material has a pH which is neutral.

There are problems with the bleaching kits that are purchased over the counter. Although they are fairly cheap, they contain an acid rinse which can damage the teeth or thin down the enamel of the teeth. This acid rinse can be extremely harmful to the teeth.

It is not advisable to bleach your teeth if you smoke. It is best to stop smoking for at least 3 weeks before bleaching starts. Smoking causes the teeth to be darker anyway and the bleaching effects will be diminished.

The technique for bleaching teeth is not for everybody. There are some situations where bleaching teeth is contraindicated such as where the front teeth are crowned, where there are very large fillings in the front teeth or where the teeth are excessively worn and there is tooth surface loss. The most ideal situation is where there is not much wrong with the teeth except for the colour which has become more yellow with age.