



Plumstead Dental Surgery

Tooth Whitening



WHAT IS TOOTH WHITENING?

Tooth whitening is a cosmetic procedure for lightening the colour of teeth. Two mild bleaching preparations are generally used: either hydrogen peroxide or carbamide peroxide. These are applied in the treatment room where they can be activated by heat or light, or can be used at home in a custom made 'tray', a transparent plastic device which is designed to hold the preparation in position over your teeth. Different strengths are prescribed for different types of use.

WHAT CAUSES TEETH TO DISCOLOUR?

Teeth naturally discolour with age and 'yellowing' or 'greying' is common as we get older, this is why tooth whitening can make you look younger. Other common causes of tooth discolouration are drinks such as coffee and red wine, foods such as curries and smoking.

WHO CAN BENEFIT FROM TOOTH WHITENING?

Most people will benefit from tooth whitening. Existing crowns and veneers will not be lightened, but old restorations can be replaced if they look dark after the treatment is completed. Discolouration on some teeth may not respond as well as others, and some can take longer or be more difficult to treat. When you have the first consultation appointment, your dentist will advise on the most suitable techniques for your teeth, the timescale and the expected results. Tooth whitening is not recommended if you are pregnant, breast feeding or allergic to plastic or peroxide.

CAN WHITENING TOOTHPASTES REPLACE WHITENING TREATMENT?

Whitening toothpastes are not substitute for professional tooth whitening. Although they may effectively remove stains they cannot affect the natural shade of teeth. They are helpful, however, for maintaining the appearance of professionally whitened teeth.

WHAT IS INVOLVED IN THE WHITENING PROCESS?

There are two main techniques which can be used separately or in combination, depending on individual requirements and preferences. The most popular technique is home bleaching where you will usually need to wear some trays loaded with gel a couple of times a day for up to 2 weeks. The other technique involves a stronger gel which is applied to your teeth in the treatment room. Chairside whitening can give you dramatic results. It is possible to combine the two techniques to intensify the effects.

ARE THERE ANY SIDE EFFECTS?

Sensitivity during treatment or for a few days after is the most frequently reported side effect. If this happens it usually disappears of its own accord soon after the treatment has stopped and can be eased by using a sensitive toothpaste or fluoride mouthwash.
