

For months she had been planning for that special day. Everything was ready and perfect...except for her smile. Sarah Andrews had yellow teeth, and was deathly afraid her brilliantly white dress would make them look even worse.

With two weeks before her wedding, she scrambled to her computer and searched "teeth whitening" on the Internet and got 800 results.

One opinion said teeth whitening would ruin the enamel on her teeth. Another said it would cause pain and swollen gums, while others were more encouraging. To separate fact from fiction, she called her dentist. Two weeks later, Sarah walked down the aisle, with a smile as gorgeous as her gown.

According to a 2003 survey by the American Dentists Association, teeth whitening, or "bleaching," is the most requested procedure among patients ages 40 to 60, and interest has continued to grow every year. Whitening toothpastes are now more popular than any other kind. Bleaching has entered its golden--or shall we say porcelain--era. In our office, it is asked about daily. Our patients who have whitened their teeth have been very satisfied with the results.

Teeth whitening is mostly done two ways: professionally or at home with over-the-counter kits. The at-home bleaching methods require a fitted mouth tray (bleaching tray) to hold the bleaching gel against the teeth either overnight or hourly, depending on the strength of the bleach dispensed.

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The professional dental office whitening method gets your teeth whiter faster in usually a single office visit. "Zoom!" is an example of this method.

With either method, the results are usually about the same. Zoom gives you a jump start, but with the trays, one can continue to whiten daily until the desired effect is reached.

As easy as teeth whitening is, there are certainly misconceptions about it that need to be addressed.

# Wedding Day BRIGHT



## Facts for a Gorgeous Smile

By Dr. Bosler

### Here are some Frequently Asked Questions:

#### Is it safe or does it damage the tooth?

Nothing detrimental to the enamel of the tooth has been documented with the ADA. Microscopic research shows no changes to the tooth surface with the use of carbamide peroxide (typical bleaching gel). Most research available was initially done with a 10% concentration. There is no literature that we have come across showing any structural changes or irreversible damage to the tooth structure.

#### What are the side effects of tooth whitening?

Most bleaching gels cause some degree of tooth sensitivity. This sensitivity to cold/hot fluids, and

air, will usually dissipate within 24-48 hours. This is normal and an expected side effect. Some of the brands of bleaching gel contain desensitizing agents, which alleviate post-bleaching sensitivity.

#### How long will whitening results last?

Generally, immediately after bleaching, the color will fade slightly and then remain stable for approximately 6 months to a year, sometimes longer. It is recommended to touch up your smile every 4-6 months with 1-2 applications.

#### How long will it take for teeth to become their whitest?

The results vary. Some teeth whiten dramatically in just a few days, while others can take a few months. The majority of people whiten up within 1-2 weeks. There are higher concentrations of carbamide peroxide available from your dentist for whitening your teeth in shorter periods of time, but these may cause increased sensitivity in some individuals.

#### Can a person get their teeth as white as on-screen movie stars?

No matter which method you choose, the results your teeth will get depend on what shade they were to begin with and the source of the discolorations. Yellow teeth tend to whiten quite quickly, while grayish teeth whiten much more slowly.

#### Isn't it cheaper just to use the whitening strips sold in the drugstores?

Yes. However, with a professional, custom bleaching tray, you will have white teeth in the front, in the back, and in between. It's impossible to cover the entire tooth with the strips, so the whitening may be uneven. The nice thing about the custom trays is that you can keep them for years and your only expense would be the bleaching solution, which comes in a nice syringe dispenser for only \$15 to \$20.

A bright smile can improve your appearance quicker and much cheaper than plastic surgery. In many cases, a person will appear younger and more youthful. Feel confident in discussing more details about whitening your teeth with your dentist next time you go in for your check up. But whatever the occasion, be sure to keep your smile beautiful and healthy! ■

Bruce Bosler DDS is a cosmetic and family dentist in Vacaville, CA with over 30 years of experience. He is a member of American Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry, the Academy of General Dentistry, the International College of Cranio-Mandibular Orthopedics, the International Association of Orthodontics, and the International Congress of Oral Implantologists. To learn more about teeth whitening contact him at 707-449-3661.

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