

Teeth Whitening Clarified...Now You Know.

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The two main choices are dentist supervised and over the counter whitening.

The 2 main ingredients are carbamide peroxide and hydrogen peroxide. 9.5% hydrogen peroxide is equivalent to 26% carbamide peroxide. Carbamide peroxide breaks down into hydrogen peroxide. Patients wear carbamide peroxide for a longer period of time so that the carbamide can break down into hydrogen peroxide, the active ingredient.

In office bleaching is the fastest. The dentist uses a very strong bleaching agent alone or in combination with a light. A hydrogen peroxide-based gel is applied after which a light may be used. Some gels are self-activating and others are light activated. The light does NOT whiten teeth. It merely activates the gel and initiates the whitening effect. The procedure takes about an hour and a half and offers immediate results. The most publicized in office whitening procedures are BriteSmile and Zoom. In our office, we prefer BriteSmile, where we can attain the maximum results with no ultraviolet exposure and a lower concentration of gel, resulting in less sensitivity. BriteSmile and Zoom use 15 – 30% hydrogen peroxides.

The at-home methods use custom fabricated trays. They are worn either overnight or hourly depending on the strength and type of gel. Effects are gradual. We suggest these for maintaining the whiteness achieved with the in-office method, used once a month or so. We provide Day White 9.5% hydrogen peroxide intended for 1 hour use. There are carbamide peroxide concentrations of 10-16% available for use with trays worn overnight.

The over-the-counter options are: Crest Tooth Whitening Strips, Colgate Simply White, etc. These products contain lower peroxide concentrations than the products that are used in your dentist's office. Although some teeth lightening will be achieved, the degree is lower than results achieved with dentist-supervised systems.

Be wary of the whitening offered on cruise ships, (not FDA approved) and provide minimal results. Mall kiosks are not regulated and are using non-professional strength gels. Many states have banned kiosks because of problems.

Results depend on the starting shade and the source of the discoloration. The more yellow, the better the whitening. Grey enamel is more difficult to bleach and can take a few months to achieve a result. The majority of people whiten within 2-3 weeks with the tray method.

To discuss your best option call A Unique Dental Experience® 254-4000 or visit www.drdell.com.