Home whitening information

What is tooth whitening and is it safe?
The solution we use to whiten your teeth is a carbamide peroxide solution in gel form.

The active ingredient is carbamide peroxide in a glycerine base. If you know of any allergy or are aware of any adverse reaction to this ingredient, please do not proceed with this treatment.

You should be aware that most bleaching systems use carbamide peroxide. This breaks down to urea and hydrogen peroxide - hydrogen peroxide is the oxidising agent which is active against the stains within a tooth. As a rough rule of thumb, the concentration of hydrogen peroxide is approximately one third of that of carbamide peroxide. Our bleaching gels are 16% carbamide peroxide. This equates to 6% hydrogen peroxide. In the UK hydrogen peroxide concentrations above 6% are illegal.

Your dentist will give you instructions on the safe and correct use of the gel.

We do not advise using the bleaching treatment if you are pregnant. There have been no adverse reactions, but long-term clinical effects are unknown.

Scientific literature has reported that 60% of patients who bleach suffer some degree of sensitivity. This has proven to be reversible - if the bleaching stops, the sensitivity resolves. There is no evidence that the tooth surface is damaged in any way.

Is everybody suitable for treatment?
Not all types of staining or discolouration respond well to tooth whitening. Results on teeth which are very dark or have patchy staining may be less predictable. Smoking and a high intake of tea, coffee, red wine, colas and foods such as berries and curry can affect the result. Teeth which are worn or eroded or which have been restored with large white fillings may also be unsuitable.

How white will my teeth become?
The amount of whitening varies with the individual and whether the initial colour of the teeth was yellow, brown or grey. Better results are achieved with yellow-brown shades. It is impossible to know how your teeth will react to the whitening, and so no guarantee can be made of the shade you may achieve.

The whitening solution will only work on natural tooth structure. It will not change the shade of white fillings, crowns, bridges, veneers or inlays. You may want to consider having these changed after the desired shade has been achieved.

What does the treatment involve?
You will need to apply whitening gel to the teeth using custom-made trays. The trays are worn for 2 hours or overnight, whichever is most convenient for you. The gel you are provided with should last one and a half to two weeks, during which time most people achieve a good shade change. If, after this period, you would like to change the shade further, you may need to follow the

procedure for an extended period and **additional syringes of whitening gel can be purchased at a cost.**

What appointments are needed?
You will need three appointments with the dentist. The first is to take impressions of your mouth to send to the laboratory. The second is to check the fit of the trays, provide you with the whitening gel and give full instruction on its safe use at home. At this appointment, the dentist will measure the current shade of your teeth.

A review appointment is normally booked 2 weeks later to review the shade of your teeth against the starting shade.

How will my teeth feel during the process?
Sensitivity of the teeth is the most common side effect of bleaching. This usually occurs around the necks of the teeth where the gum has receded and is usually slight and temporary. Techniques to reduce sensitivity are listed below:

- Do not attend for scaling whilst teeth are sensitive
- Avoid acidic foods and drinks – fruit, fruit juices, wine and yoghurt
- Use a toothpaste designed to help alleviate sensitivity, during and following treatment
- Alternate whitening sessions with an application of sensitive toothpaste in the whitening trays. Do this for 30 minutes.
- Skip whitening sessions, for example whiten for 1 night then leave for 1 night

Benefits and risks
As with any treatment there are benefits and risks.

The main benefit is that the teeth can be whitened fairly quickly in a simple manner. Another benefit of this type of whitening is that, if you store your trays safely according to the dentist's advice, they can be used again at any stage to "top-up" the whitening.

As mentioned above, sensitivity may result during whitening. If this should occur, follow the instructions above to reduce the sensitivity. If symptoms persist contact the surgery for further advice.

Research has been shown that the use of peroxide to bleach teeth is safe. There is also new research to show that it poses no risk to soft tissues (gums, cheeks etc). Long term effects are unknown.

Do's and don'ts
Do:

- Follow the instructions given to you by your dentist
- Keep your whitening gel in the fridge
- Avoid acidic foods and drinks
- Buy some sensitive style toothpaste – just in case!
- Keep your whitening trays moist and store them in a safe place away from dogs and small children – dogs love to chew them!

Don't:

- Eat strong coloured foods or drinks during the whitening process – curry, berries, red wine etc.
- Over-use the gel – using more gel in the trays will not result in a quicker shade change but will just spill out onto your gums

Please remember that no guarantee can be made as to the extent of shade change you will achieve. By choosing to undergo this treatment, you accept any potential risks.