

FOCUS

ON DENTAL HYGIENE

WHITER TEETH FROM A TUBE OF TOOTHPASTE? DON'T COUNT ON IT

Many whitening toothpastes are hyped as being an effective and a tempting alternative to professional whitening systems. But do they actually work? Contrary to what advertisers lead us to believe, it is simply not possible for commercial whitening toothpastes to actually whiten teeth. They are not formulated with the same active ingredients or concentrations used in professional whitening systems. Often they are found to be extremely abrasive in an attempt to remove superficial stains and create a "whiter-looking" smile. The abrasion rate of these toothpastes can result in unnecessary wear and cause more harm to root and tooth surfaces — and even increase sensitivity. Don't be fooled by the advertisers!

Top 5 myths about tooth-whitening systems

1. It's harmful to the teeth and gums

Not so fast. When advised and supervised by your dentist or dental health care professional, the whitening process is completely safe, painless and can be extremely rewarding. In fact, reports have shown that in many cases whitening may actually help patients become more conscientious about their oral health. Keep in mind compliance with post-whitening instructions plays a significant role in the success of the whitening process.

2. Custom trays aren't important

The tools are there for a reason. When deciding to use an at-home system, a custom whitening tray is essential to the success of the whitening process. A custom tray is made by your dental health care professional and fits precisely to your teeth. It will ensure the custom fit required to lessen the chance of gum irritation from the tray and from seepage of the whitening gel onto the tissues. Having a custom tray also allows the whitening gel to remain in direct contact with the surface of the teeth for an extended period of time, allowing for more uniform and faster whitening.

3. All whitening systems are essentially the same

Not by a long shot. Whitening products vary tremendously, including ways

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in which the product can be applied to the teeth. There are many different systems: at-home, in-office as well as strictly over-the-counter. Over-the-counter systems are much cheaper and are not nearly as effective or long-lasting as professional tooth whitening. Overall, whitening products vary in active ingredients, strength, effectiveness, pH, composition and consistency. Shop around and consult with a dental professional to determine the best option for you.

4. The results will look fake

With most whitening systems, and particularly when supervised by a dental professional, you can trust the process and your ability to have complete control over the results. When having a professional in-office whitening procedure, they will develop a treatment plan and follow your instructions on the degree of whiteness you desire. With at-home systems, you can stop the process at any time during the course of treatment once you've reached the desired whiteness. Your dental professional can advise you of the various factors to consider, making certain you do not over-whiten.

5. It's permanent

That would be nice, but ... NOT. Color stability has a lot to do with your oral health care habits. These include your daily dental care and the frequency of your professional cleanings, as well as your consumption of foods and beverages that can stain teeth. Additionally, dental health care products that contain dyes and colorings, as well as smoking and chewing tobacco, can stain your teeth, cosmetic work and tooth-colored filling materials. Avoid commercial toothpastes and mouthrinses that are colored.

Closing Thoughts

The safest and most effective way to whiten your smile and keep it lasting as long as possible is to use a professional whitening system that has been selected by you and your dental professional. The system should be supported with home care dental products that are low in abrasion and are color and dye-free.

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