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INSPIRING HEALTH
Comprehensive medical centre

TOOTH WHITENING

Q. What is tooth whitening?

A. Professional tooth whitening is an effective way of lightening the natural colour of your teeth without removing any of your tooth's surface. It cannot make a complete colour change, but it may lighten the existing shade quite substantially.

When it comes to whiter teeth, even those with an impeccable oral hygiene routine will suffer from some level of discolouration eventually. Conveniently, there are a number of quick and easy teeth whitening methods to lighten the colour of your teeth without causing any damage to the tooth health.

Q. Why would I need my teeth whitened?

A. There are a number of reasons why you might want to get your teeth whitened. Very few people have brilliant-white teeth, and our teeth can also become more discoloured as we get older.

Your teeth can also be stained on the surface by food and drinks such as tea, coffee, red wine and smoking.

'Calculus' or tartar can also affect the colour of your teeth. Some people may have staining under the surface, which can be caused by certain antibiotics or by tiny cracks in the teeth which take up stain.



Q. Who is whitening appropriate for?

A. Anyone with a healthy mouth should benefit from a teeth whitening treatment. However, if you have gum disease or other dental problems, your dentist may decide that teeth whitening will not be suitable, until successfully treated.

Treatment has been successfully carried out by professionals for decades and millions of people worldwide have benefited

from this treatment.

Q. What does tooth whitening involve?

A. Most teeth whitening kits work using a bleaching agent, normally containing peroxide.

This, when used at safe levels, is an effective way of removing the stains from within the tooth that cause discolouration.

There are a number of ways you can have a tooth whitening treatment administered.

There are two main types of whitening: Whitening at the dentist's office (chair side) or dentist supervised home whitening.

Your dentist will be able to discuss with you what is involved in each type and which one would be best to help get the result you want.

Chair-side 'power' whitening

Chair-side 'power' whitening is achieved by applying a teeth whitening gel and then shining a powerful light on your teeth to accelerate the process of removing the internal tooth stains.

The bleaching solution used for a power whitening treatment usually contains a higher concentration of peroxide than would be used in other methods, so a protective gel will be applied to your lips and gums. In addition, the gums will be covered with rolls of cotton wool and a retractor will be used to keep your lips and cheeks a safe distance from your teeth. The whole process takes about 1-2 hours.

Some patients may experience an instant improvement but require dentist-supervised home whitening in addition, particularly when the level of staining is advanced and for longer lasting effects.

Dentist-supervised whitening (bleaching kits)

This method will take a couple of weeks and require multiple trips to your dentist. After a consultation, your first appointment will involve having a mould of your teeth cast using dental putty. Over the next 5-10 days a technician will use this mould to create a custom-made tooth whitening tray for you. Once the tray is ready, you'll go back to the dentist who will make sure the trays fit. Your dentist will instruct you how to perform the rest of the whitening treatment in your own home, and will review you after 2 weeks to see the changes.

This home teeth whitening option is less expensive than

Q. Will it hurt and are there any side effects?

A. Most people find that their teeth are much more sensitive for the next couple of days following treatment.

This is not usually experienced as a constant pain, but intermittent bursts of discomfort. It's recommended that you avoid especially hot or cold food or drink for around 24-48 hours after treatment.

Your dentist may also suggest the use of desensitising toothpastes or gels to help in addition to some pain killers.

Some people may have slight patches on the gum line, but these will disappear within a few days of treatment.

Extreme sensitivity or burning of gums is not normal. If you are in pain and not getting relief from the instructions given by the dentist, return to see your dentist as soon as possible.

Bleaching is the safest way of whitening your teeth. The lower the concentration of bleach used, the less likely that you will get any side effects.

Q. Will the effects be permanent?

A. No. Your teeth will still be susceptible to staining after the treatment. This means the effect will fade, particularly if you drink tea, coffee, and red wine or are a smoker.

The whitening offered by bleaching kits (dentist-supervised home bleaching) tends to offer more enduring results than laser treatment effects but takes longer to achieve.

Q. How long will my teeth stay white?

A. Results will vary from person to person depending on the original colour of your teeth and your general lifestyle. You can expect tooth whitening carried out by a dental professional to last between 1 – 3 years before you need top-up treatment.

Q. Why go to a dentist when home whitening kits are available?

A. When dealing with a bleaching agent such as peroxide, it is possible to burn yourself.

As a result, DIY home kits, including teeth whitening strips, cannot be sold at the same strength as professionals would use. This means they will be less effective, or require a more frequent use to achieve the same results. This, in turn, could lead to gum irritation and sensitive teeth. Incorrect use or overuse of bleach could also damage the enamel, which is why these treatments should be avoided, even if they appear cheaper than professional treatment.

Q. What about whitening toothpastes?

A. There are several whitening toothpastes on the market. Although they do not affect the natural colour of your teeth, they may be effective at removing staining.

Therefore, they may improve the overall appearance of your teeth. Whitening toothpastes may also help the effect to last, once your teeth have been professionally whitened. Some whitening toothpastes can however be abrasive on the teeth, and so it is important to discuss with your dentist about which toothpaste to use.

Q. Can a single tooth which has been root filled be whitened?

A. Yes. Sometimes 'dead' teeth get discoloured after a root filling. If the tooth has been root treated, the canal (which contained the nerve, and now the root filling) may be reopened. The whitening product is applied from the inside to whiten the tooth.

Q. When might tooth whitening not work?

A. You should also be aware that whitening will only work on natural teeth; false teeth, crowns, bridges, fillings and veneers will be unresponsive to the process. This could potentially leave you with teeth with uneven colouration. If you have de-calcifications (white spots) on your teeth, these might actually become more noticeable after bleaching.

It's important that during the pre-treatment consultation you understand the need and cost for additional treatment to replace crowns, veneers and fillings.

If you have dentures and these are stained and discoloured, the dental team can assist in cleaning them.

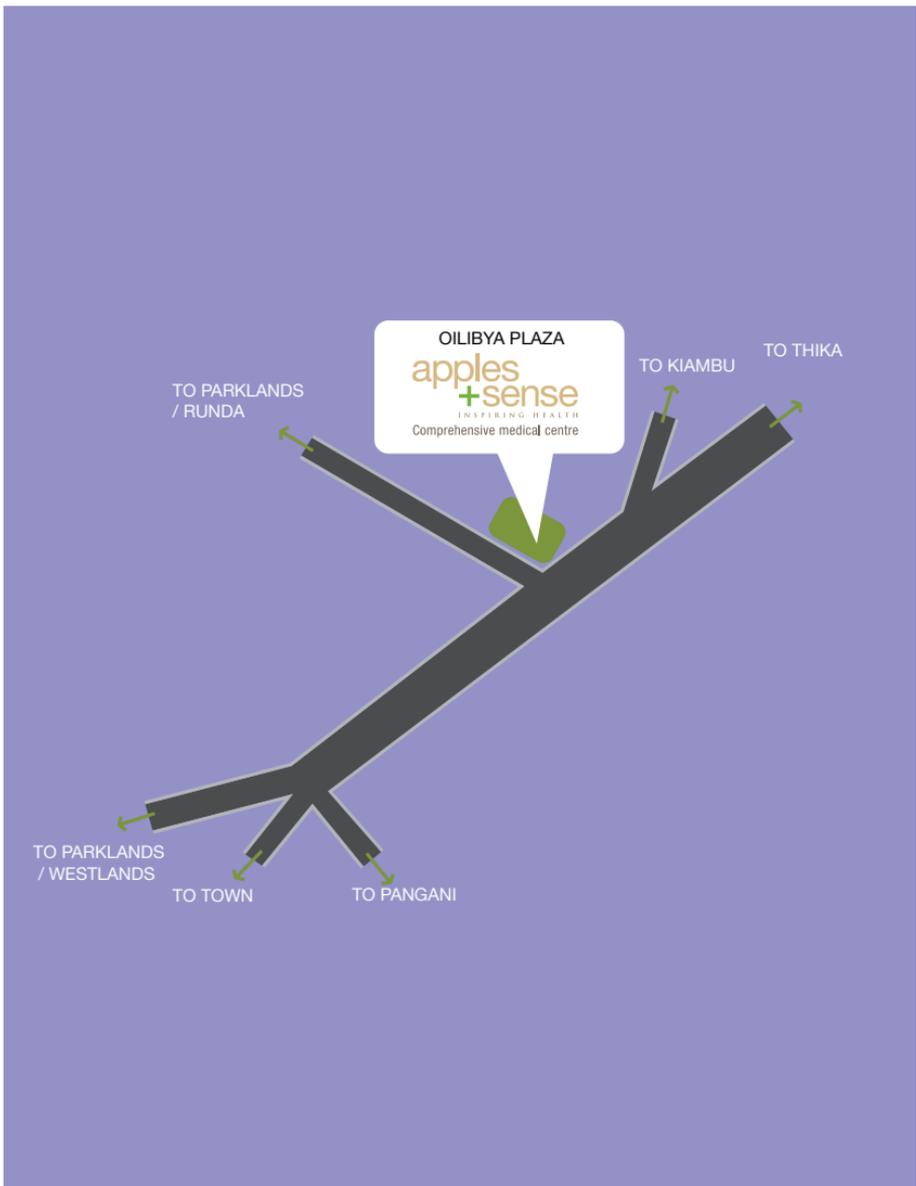
Q. How can I look after my teeth once they have been whitened?

A. You can help to keep your teeth white by cutting down on the amount of food and drinks you have that can stain teeth. Don't forget, stopping smoking can also help prevent discolouration and staining.

We recommend the following tips to take care of your teeth:

- Brush your teeth last thing at night and at least one other time during the day, with a fluoride toothpaste.
- Cut down on how often you have sugary foods and drinks.
- Visit your dental team regularly, as often as they recommend.





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