



What is tooth whitening?

Tooth whitening can be a very effective way of lightening the natural colour of your teeth with removing any of the tooth surface. It cannot make a complete colour change, but it may lighten the existing shade.

Why would I need my teeth whitened?

As we get older our teeth get darker. This is partly due to our getting older, but it is also caused by the foods we eat and drink, and by other habits such as smoking. Tea, coffee, blackcurrant juice, red wine and other foods that have strong colours can have an effect on the overall colour of our teeth.

Teeth may also darken as a result of some antibiotics.

Some people naturally have a more grey shade of teeth. Other people have white spots on their teeth. This can be caused by early tooth decay, or illness when the tooth was forming.

There are a number of reasons why you might get your teeth whitened.

Everyone is different; and just as our hair and skin colour vary, so do our teeth. Very few people have brilliant-white teeth.

'Calculus' or tartar can also affect the colour of your teeth. Some people may have staining under the enamel surface or tiny cracks can appear in the teeth which take up stains.

What does tooth whitening involve?

Professional bleaching is the most usual method of tooth whitening. Your dentist will assess you first to see whether tooth whitening is suitable for you. You will be told if you are suitable for the treatment, and if so your dentist will supervise it.

The type of whitening we perform is a hybrid technique using Enlighten products, starting with 'dentist-supervised home whitening'. You will have trays made specially to fit into your mouth like gum-shields. The conditioning gel is then put in the trays and you will be given a routine to follow at home. The second phase of the treatment involves the 'chair-side whitening'. First the dentist, will put a rubber shield or a gel on your gums to

protect them. They will then apply the whitening product to your teeth, again using a specially made tray, and a special light is used.

The 'active ingredient' in the whitening product is usually hydrogen peroxide or carbamide peroxide. As the active ingredient is broken down, oxygen gets into the enamel and dentine of the teeth and the tooth colour is made lighter.

Phase 1

First, you will need up to four visits to the dentist. Your dentist will need to make a thin mouthguard and will take impressions for this at the first appointment. Once your dentist has started the treatment, you will need to continue the treatment at home. This means regularly applying the whitening product over fourteen nights.

Phase 2

On Day 15, you re-attend the surgery for the chair-side 'power whitening'. Although this is often called 'laser whitening', it is not a laser that is used. Gel is painted onto your teeth and then a light is shone onto the gel to speed up the whitening reaction. This procedure usually takes about one hour.

Phase

Following completion of the whitening procedure, we recommend that you periodically top-up the whitening (maintenance phase) by applying conditioning gel similar to the process in Phase 1. Refill syringes are available from the dentist.

How much does tooth whitening cost?

Enlighten whitening system (Phases 1 +2) - £500

Refill syringes (Phase 3) - £50