

Your Dental Health ... News and Info



December, 2008



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Bleaching

Bleaching or tooth whitening over the past 5 years has become one of the fastest growing areas in dentistry and even for the major producers of dental products. Surrounding this growth a large number of misconceptions, rumors and falsehoods arise. I am going to review a few of the most asked questions on the topic.

I am often asked if the bleaching process erodes or dissolves the teeth? The simple answer to this is no. The process of bleaching is not an erosive process; rather it is one of a deep cleaning. Teeth when viewed under a microscope appear a lot like a sponge and have thousands of small tubes or tubules. It is within these tubes that our staining happens. The natural pigments found in most of our foods over time leach into these tubes and slowly change the color of our teeth. Bleaching as we call it is really the process of removing this stain, like a deep cleaning for the surface of your teeth.

What is the best bleaching product? This becomes a bit of a question of personal preference because all bleaches are essentially working the same way, by removing extrinsic stain. The differences are really in the delivery system and how effective it works, coupled with the concentration of the bleaching product. The concentration of over the counter products is usually in the 1-3% range. In comparison the concentrations of the products one buys from their dentist or that is used in the dental office is 10-45%. As you look at these numbers you can see why the in office procedures deliver such noticeable results in a short period of time. The two main delivery systems are take home bleaching trays or an in office laser bleaching procedure. Both systems are very effective and which one you choose should most likely be a decision you and your dentist make together.

Why do teeth get so sensitive when I bleach? Tooth sensitivity to hot and cold after bleaching is a natural result. As those tubes or tubules are cleaned out of the products causing the staining the tubes become clear and it is through these tubes that our bodies feel temperature change in teeth. So, as the tubes get cleaner, or teeth get whiter, they can get some sensitive. I will say sensitivity is not a given; only about 25% of patients will get sensitivity and it is not permanent. The body grows used to the new clean tubes in a few days time. Fluoride treatment and or desensitizing gels are always available and work very quickly.

What do you think is the most effective bleaching process? Our most commonly recommended bleaching protocol here at the Center for Premier Dentistry is laser bleaching initially and then follow up bleaching or touch up bleaching with your take home trays. All of our patients who laser bleach are given a free set of take home bleaching trays, so, that over the years they may maintain their nice white smile. The trays also offer a delivery system for desensitizing gels.

If you have any additional questions for the doctors or if you would like to schedule a consultation appointment to discuss bleaching options please feel free to call us here at the Center for Premier Dentistry 941-924-7571.