



Professional Tooth Whitening Patient Information

R.S.Hendry DDS BSc
www.drhendry.ca

The Process

Professional tooth whitening uses a hydrogen peroxide or carbamide peroxide gel, which the patient applies to the teeth for several hours daily (or nightly) for several weeks, gradually lightening the teeth.

The system uses a custom-made clear plastic tray, or sleeve, which covers the teeth and keeps the material in contact with the teeth. Making this requires a short impression appointment before the actual bleaching.

We normally treat the upper teeth first, then the lowers. This minimizes the chance of significant side-effects, and spreads out the cost to the patient.

Effectiveness

The success and satisfaction rates are high - but not perfect. The speed and degree of whitening that can be achieved varies with the individual - some people achieve dramatic, quick results, while others require more time and patience and get a more modest whitening. Approximately 90% of our patients achieve a good result.

Teeth have a natural tendency to darken and accumulate colour with age, and the effects of tooth bleaching tend to fade gradually. Many patients require a short "booster" treatment after a year or so, to maintain the original level of whitening. As long as the original plastic trays are kept, and are still in good condition, this is generally only a matter of dispensing enough bleach gel for a week or so.

Cost

(Regulations prevent us quoting fees on the Web. If you're in our area, please feel free to call us about that.)

Safety and Side-effects

This material is as safe as the main ingredient: carbamide or hydrogen peroxide. This is the same material available in drugstores as an antiseptic mouth rinse, or in the various over-the-counter tooth whitening products - the main difference is the concentration.

These professional bleaching products are approved by Health Canada, and have been in widespread use for several years.

We do commonly see two side-effects with these products: tooth sensitivity and, more rarely gum irritation or reaction to the bleaching gels. Sensitivity is usually minor and temporary, but the occasional patient with sensitive teeth may find that this limits their ability to complete the treatment.

Although both of these side-effects are generally mild, we do need to ensure before we proceed that your gums are healthy, and that there are no old, leaking fillings that might increase the risk of sensitivity. We also need to see you regularly during treatment, to check your teeth and gums - this only requires 5 minutes each time.

What about Crest Whitestrips?

We're not yet sure about this recent innovation in do-it-yourself whitening. Whitestrips use a less-concentrated solution of bleaching agent, and prefabricated stick-on strips instead of custom-fitted trays.

Time will tell whether they live up to the hype. The cost is lower than professional whitening, and safety is probably not a big concern because of the lower-strength of the product. They're worth a try for patients on a budget.