

Factsheet

Teeth whitening

It is important to know the facts about teeth whitening and see the right person for the job – your dentist.

What causes teeth to change colour?

- The white enamel on the outside of teeth can wear away. This makes teeth look darker and more yellow.
- Foods such as spices, berries, beetroot, and sauces.
- Drinks such as tea, coffee, and red wine.
- Tar from cigarette smoking.
- Damage to teeth from accidents.
- Some medicines that are taken by pregnant women or babies when teeth are growing.

Medicines and damage from accidents can change the colour of teeth. These stains may be deep inside the teeth. Whitening gels used on the outside of teeth may not change the colour of these teeth. Your dentist can talk to you about other treatment options to try and make these teeth whiter.

Tips to avoid staining

- Take good care of your teeth by brushing and cleaning between them every day.
- Do not smoke.
- Rinse your mouth with water after having food or drinks that can cause stains.

Whitening options

At-home teeth whitening

Thin plastic trays are made to fit over the teeth. At home, whitening gel is placed in the trays and they are worn over the teeth every day. Your dentist will talk with you about how to do this safely. They will let you how to put the gel in the trays, how much gel to use, how long to wear the trays for each day, and how many days to do it.

Whitening toothpaste

Whitening toothpastes work by helping to remove or prevent stains on the outside surfaces of teeth. They do not usually make a large difference to the colour of the teeth.

Professional ‘in-chair’ whitening

A strong teeth whitening gel is used during an appointment at the dental clinic. You will leave your appointment with whiter teeth. Your dentist knows how to do this treatment safely.

