

PEARLY WHITES



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2016 Young Dentist of the Year

I often get asked by patients, family and friends about tooth whitening. Do the whitening toothpastes work? What about lasers? What about the strips? And my personal favourite - does coconut oil work? So let me be very clear: yes, coconut oil does have several health benefits, but unfortunately sloshing coconut oil around your mouth for a quarter of an hour every day will not make your teeth whiter!

Ok let's start from the beginning; teeth can be discoloured for several reasons, and it is so important that you see your dentist to find out the reasons why. Teeth may look yellow due to decay (rotting teeth), discoloured old fillings, and acid wear and erosion. So really going to see anyone who is not a health professional, who cannot provide you with the appropriate diagnosis is not the best way to resolve the concerns. At the end of the day if you were concerned about the discolouration of your skin would you go to a beautician rather than a dermatologist? Incidentally it is also the law - no one other than a dental professional can whiten teeth.

Now assuming that your teeth are free from health problems, whitening is one of the most effective and efficient ways to improve the appearance of your teeth. Performed by a dental professional, it's very safe and no long term detrimental health effects have been proven.

Some whitening toothpastes however can be ineffective and cause more harm than good. They basically have abrasive particles which wear down the teeth, and although they aim to remove stains from the teeth, they often damage the enamel. Now let's talk lasers. Lasers seem to be the 'Holy Grail' to solve all our problems in today's world. However, lasers are no longer permitted for tooth whitening and the term has incorrectly been misconstrued.



Philips however offers an in-surgery tooth whitening option which dentists can use to treat patients. This is not a laser treatment - it uses light technology. The treatment can only be undertaken by a dentist or hygienist who will apply peroxide-based gel on the teeth for several 15 minute cycles which is activated using a special lamp directed towards the teeth. Zoom! chairside system whitens teeth by up to six shades in an hour for time-poor patients who want immediate results. Tests have also shown that the LED technology in its WhiteSpeed lamp makes it 40% more effective than non-light activated systems.

However I recommend patients 'top up' the effects with a Philips' home whitening treatment - the actual gold standard of tooth whitening. This requires the dentist to make a bespoke mouth guard called a tray by taking moulds of your teeth. These trays act as a reservoir for a small amount of peroxide gel (at a safe level which doesn't damage the tooth enamel) which is dotted into the tray by the patient (the dentist explains how) and placed over the teeth. For more information visit

www.philips.co.uk