

At-Home Teeth Bleaching

Bleaching of the teeth with at-home trays is accomplished by wearing bleaching trays with bleaching gel in them. The trays will be made of a thin clear flexible vinyl. Most patients find these trays very comfortable to wear and sleep with. You will see that the trays fit the teeth very well, and there is a gap (reservoir) on the outer side of each tooth (except there are no reservoirs on the very last back molars). These reservoirs will hold excess bleaching gel.

You will be given a bleaching kit. This kit will include several syringes of bleaching gel and a storage case for the bleaching trays. When you are finished with the entire **BLEACHING** process, place any remaining bleaching gel syringes in the refrigerator to extend the shelf-life.

You will start your bleaching immediately before sleep. If you usually lie in bed watching television before you sleep, wait until you are ready to sleep before using your bleach trays.

It is important to brush immediately before bleaching because protein from your saliva will coat your teeth within minutes after brushing, and could inhibit the bleaching agent from whitening your teeth as quickly. If you normally tend to have teeth that are sensitive to tooth brushing, cold or sweets, use **Sensodyne Toothpaste** instead. This will help de-sensitize your teeth before bleaching.

Squeeze a dab of bleaching gel into each reservoir on the inner side of the outer walls of the trays (except in the very last molars). We will demonstrate this for you during your next visit. The gel is thick and the trays are flexible, so the gel will cause the outer rim of the tray to be pushed away from the gum line. After you put the tray in you'll need to firmly push the tray back against the teeth to establish the seal of the tray at the gum line – this is very important. We will demonstrate this also.

If you've put too much gel in the tray, you'll notice a significant amount of gel oozing out from under the edge of the tray. Take a Q-Tip and remove the excess and next time use a little less gel. If you've put in too little gel, you will see through the clear tray some large open voids (little bubbles are OK) in the reservoirs not entirely filled with gel. If you see this, do NOT remove the tray. There is plenty gel in the reservoirs to start your bleaching, but next time use a little more gel.

In the morning, after removing the trays, rinse your mouth with luke-warm water. Cold or hot water may be slightly uncomfortable to rinse with at that time. Clean the trays with Q-tips under COOL running water.

Your teeth and gums may become sore and sensitive during the first 3-4 days of bleaching. Take Advil every 4 hours during the day will help this. This sensitivity usually decreases after the first 3-4 days. Bleach every other day if teeth are very sensitive.

Additionally, you should wear the bleaching trays while you sleep, at least one night every one to four months as additional protection against darkening. Wearing the trays one night every 3-4 months will keep your teeth a very stable color indefinitely, however if you want to keep them at an even brighter white indefinitely, you may wear the bleaching trays one night every month.

In certain cases, we may have even more frequent maintenance in the beginning to “set” the color. Follow the instructions and your teeth should always stay white and bright.

During the two weeks of at-home bleaching, stay away from staining foods and drinks. Remember I mentioned the oxygen cleans out the “pores” of the teeth? We don’t want stain to fill in these microscopic pores during bleaching. That would only reduce the success of bleaching. Any food or beverage which would permanently stain a white shirt or blouse could also stain your teeth. If possible, when drinking a staining beverage, it may help to keep the beverage off the outer surface of the teeth by carefully drinking through a straw. Smoking should also be held to the very minimum during the bleaching process.

Store your bleach trays safely. Keep them in the case provided. Keep them away from heat—heat will distort them. Don’t leave them in the hot car. Don’t put or wash them in warm or hot water. And keep them away from your dog. Dogs seem to think that bleaching trays are chew-toys.