

Healthy You

FAST FACTS FOR YOUR HEALTH

Whiten the Right Way

Almost all of us can agree that we'd love a whiter and brighter smile. Teeth whitening is a popular dental request, and there are so many options nowadays to achieve whiter teeth, from over-the-counter products to professional whitening systems performed at the dentist's office. But it's important to know that not all teeth whitening systems are created equal, so review this quick guide before wasting your valuable money and time on a product that won't deliver.

DO: Talk to your dentist first. It's important to talk to your dentist before trying a whitening product because he or she will help steer you away from whitening products that aren't effective or safe. If you aren't looking for a professional whitening procedure, your dentist can share recommendations for good over-the-counter products to try. It's also a smart idea to talk to your dentist about a whitening strategy because he or she can discuss how side effects of teeth whitening products apply to you. One of the most common is tooth sensitivity, so if your dentist knows that you've experienced tooth sensitivity, he or she will make a special point to discuss this with you.

DO: Understand your dental insurance coverage. If you decide to undergo a professional teeth whitening procedure, it's important to know what it will cost beforehand. Most Delta Dental of Iowa plans don't include teeth whitening services, so talk to your dentist and call the Delta Dental of Iowa Customer Service team (you can find the number on the back of your Delta Dental of Iowa ID card) to confirm your coverage before undergoing a professional teeth whitening treatment. Knowing your out-of-pocket costs before you undergo treatment will ensure you don't face any surprises after.

DON'T: Fall for teeth whitening gimmicks. There's a huge demand for teeth whitening solutions, and lots of strange and even harmful products have popped up on the market. One example is activated charcoal teeth whitening, which has not been proven to whiten teeth and may actually erode the enamel (the outer layer of your tooth). If you wear down your enamel, you can't get it back. If you find a whitening product that catches your eye, give your dentist a call before purchasing it. Getting a dentist's approval first will give you the assurance that you're whitening your teeth the right way.

DON'T: Consume lots of food-staining food and drink after whitening your teeth. Teeth whiteners, even professional ones, can't keep your teeth sparkling white forever, but you can keep them whiter longer by avoiding things known to stain your teeth.

Foods like tomato sauces, balsamic vinegar, berries and soy sauce can darken teeth; drinks like coffee, tea, soda, red wine and energy drinks should also be limited after a whitening procedure. Tobacco is another big teeth stainer, so limit smoking and tobacco use as well to keep your teeth brighter and whiter for longer.

DO: Keep your teeth whiter with simple dental health strategies. Another way to keep your teeth whiter for longer is to stick with up your twice-daily brushing and flossing routine — and keep your twice-yearly dental appointments on the calendar. A solid dental health foundation of brushing, flossing and dental visits will keep your teeth healthy from the inside out.

SOURCES:

https://www.deltadentalins.com/oral_health/whitening.html

<https://www.healthline.com/health/foods-that-stain-teeth#teeth-staining-foods-and-drinks>

<https://www.healthline.com/health/activated-charcoal-teeth-whitening#does-charcoal-whiten-teeth>

A Safer Snooze: Protecting Your Mouth While You Sleep

Getting a peaceful night's sleep is one of the best things you can do for your health, but some dental dangers lurk while you're in dreamland. Fortunately, a few simple steps will keep your mouth healthy overnight.

Problem: Too much bacteria. Too much bacteria in your mouth causes several problems, one of the most common being bad breath. During the day, saliva helps control the bacteria levels in your mouth, but you don't produce as much saliva while you're asleep. This leads to a buildup of bacteria in your mouth overnight.

Solution: Get back to basics at bedtime. Having a strong dental health routine at bedtime will help lessen the effects of overnight bacteria buildup. Brushing and flossing your teeth followed by a rinse with a fluoridated mouthwash before you go to bed will help keep bacteria at bay.

Problem: Mouth breathing. Some people breathe through their mouths when they sleep because a stuffy nose prevents them from comfortably breathing through their nose. One of the problems with mouth breathing is it can lead to dry mouth. Dry mouth isn't just uncomfortable, it can cause a host of other oral health problems, including gum disease and cavities.

Solution: Keep water close by. Your biggest ally against dry mouth is simply drinking water. Take a few sips of water before you hit the hay, and keep a glass close by in case you wake up thirsty in the middle of the night. If a stuffy nose is causing your mouth breathing, consider also using a saline spray before bed and add an extra pillow to raise your head a bit.

Problem: Snoring. If you snore, you're certainly not alone: More than 90 million Americans snore every night.¹ Although it's common, it's not a harmless habit. Snoring, like mouth breathing, can cause dry mouth.

Solution: Take a closer look at some lifestyle habits. Making some simple lifestyle adjustments may reduce snoring. First, if you know you're not getting enough sleep, make an effort to go to sleep earlier or talk to your doctor about ways to help you get more quality sleep at night. Sleeping on your side will also reduce snoring, as will drinking plenty of water throughout the day and limiting your alcohol consumption before bed.

Problem: Teeth grinding (also known as bruxism). Teeth grinding at night can cause several problems, including pain, sensitivity, headaches, earaches, jawaches, even chipping of teeth.

Solution: Get to the source of the clenching. People who grind their teeth at night often deal with stress during the day. Understanding the source of that stress and finding ways to let it go may help eliminate teeth grinding all together. Another solution is to stop consuming caffeine after dinner, which can also worsen teeth grinding. If you or one of your children grinds your teeth, talk to your dentist. He or she can recommend a mouth guard to wear at night that will help protect your mouth from the harmful effects of teeth grinding.

A restful night's sleep should be just that — restful. Get your much needed zzz's and know that you've protected your mouth, too, by keeping these simple tips in mind each evening.

SOURCE:

[https://sleepalliance.com/blog/90-million-americans-suffer-from-snoring-how-serious-is-your-snoring-issue#:~:text=About%2090%20million%20Americans%20suffer,Obstructive%20Sleep%20Apnea%20\(OSA\).](https://sleepalliance.com/blog/90-million-americans-suffer-from-snoring-how-serious-is-your-snoring-issue#:~:text=About%2090%20million%20Americans%20suffer,Obstructive%20Sleep%20Apnea%20(OSA).)