

# Facts About Teeth Whiteners

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Dear Valued Patient,

As your dental health care professionals, Altima Dental recognizes the importance of keeping our patients informed. Here are some facts you should know about over-the-counter (OTC) teeth whitening products. Although some of these products are inexpensive and seem easy to use, they provide questionable results, if any.

## Whitening Gum:

1. Doesn't contain peroxide, but supposedly breaks up surface stains. To see an effect, you would need to chew two pieces for at least twenty minutes, four times a day, and it would take six weeks to lighten by one shade.
2. Products containing peroxide can produce a better result in only two weeks.
3. This is a quick and temporary whitening aid, with no longevity.

## Whitening Toothpastes:

1. Take much product over time to maintain. Even with an effective active ingredient, the product is not held against your teeth for the length of time required to generate any significant results.
2. Can be abrasive to tooth enamel (some brands more than others).
3. Are good at removing surface stains, but do little to actually whiten teeth.

## Paint-on Whitening Products:

1. Are active on teeth for approximately 2.5 minutes, which is typically not enough time to produce substantial results. The ingredients are easily diluted or washed away by oral fluids or friction produced by lip, tongue or cheek movements.
2. Application can be awkward and incomplete, resulting in only partial coverage of the teeth. Drying the teeth and ensuring the product evenly adheres to the tooth's surface can be challenging.
3. Effect produced will be very minimal or take an extended number of treatments.

## Whitening Strips:

1. Require a commitment of several weeks before a noticeable change can be observed.
2. Only work on your front six teeth.
3. Only work on perfectly straight teeth.
4. Requires re-treatment every six months - short-term savings may still result in a significant long-term investment.
5. Can cause discomfort, drooling, sensitivity and inconvenience.
6. Patient under-use or over-use of strips can negatively affect the results.
7. Can cause uneven whitening (or striping) of the teeth, or incomplete coverage of all visible teeth.

## OTC Mouth-Tray Whiteners:

1. Since mouth trays are one-size-fits-all, the trays can be ill fitting and uncomfortable.
2. Many testers have found these products to be ineffective, or caused sore throats.
3. Comparatively, tray-based products do provide a longer lasting whitening result than gum, paint-on products, toothpaste or strips.

## Whitening by a Dental Professional

### (in-office or take home):

1. Experts agree that before choosing any whitening product, discussing your options with your dentist before proceeding is the wisest course of action. A proper oral exam will determine whether or not you are a suitable candidate for a number of whitening treatments.
2. Mouth trays are individually customized to fit each person's teeth and mouth, thus causing little to no discomfort.
3. Teeth whiteners can cause sensitivity, and your dental team can help prevent that.
4. The results can be observed in days, rather than weeks.
5. Re-treatment may not be required for years - results are much longer lasting.
6. Light therapy or laser can be used in the dental office along with peroxide to speed things up, shortening the entire whitening process to as little as one hour.
7. Dentist-supervised whitening plans (i.e. monitored by a doctor) usually obtain better results versus self-monitored treatments.
8. Bleaching effectiveness depends on the percentage of peroxide and the length of time it is in contact with your teeth. OTC products generally contain no more than 6% peroxide, while dental professionals can safely use up to 43% peroxide.
9. Bleaching works best for yellow teeth (food-related staining), but not quite as well for gray teeth (medicine-related staining).
10. Crowns, fillings and veneers aren't whitened by OTC products. This is important if you have visible dental work that differs in colour from your natural teeth.
11. Over a two-year period, it would cost more to obtain similar whitening results with OTC products, compared to only one professional treatment with your dentist.
12. If there are any adverse effects or underlying dental conditions, your dental team can assist you immediately.

For a complimentary consultation about teeth whitening, contact us today.

*Thank you for trusting Altima with your oral health!*

