



Beauty editor
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GET A dazzling smile

Bewildered by the teeth-whitening products on the market? Here's how to get your pearly whites gleaming

We've all seen the photos of grinning Hollywood stars sporting dazzling white teeth, and wondered how we can get a smile like that. The good news is that the latest products and high-tech procedures can make your dream of whiter teeth a reality! We give you the rundown on the DIY and professional options, and top tips on how to maintain your new pearly whites.

Causes of staining

Barry Porter of McIntosh Dental in Henderson, Auckland, says there are many causes of teeth discolouration, but the main culprits are "smoking, coffee, tea, red wine and carbonated drinks like cola". Eating highly coloured foods (tomatoes, beetroots, curry, soy sauce), poor oral hygiene and ageing also contribute.

The main colour of your teeth comes from the body of the tooth, and is reflected through enamel. As we age, enamel wears and teeth may darken. Some people have internal staining due to the consumption of Tetracycline (an antibiotic) at a young age, or incurred injuries that have damaged nerves.

Brush and floss teeth at

least twice a day, advises Dr Porter, and rinse with water after drinking coffee, wine or cola.

"An electric toothbrush may also help significantly because it does a much better job at removing any excess food that sits on tooth surfaces, staining them. Going to the dental hygienist regularly for cleaning is also a good way to prevent teeth from getting discoloured."

My experience

Although my teeth aren't particularly stained, I leapt at the chance to have an at-home whitening treatment from McIntosh Dental. There are also "in-chair" intense whitening options, but some people experience "zinger" pains and sensitivity with these.

After a scale and polish, impressions were taken to create small plastic trays for my upper and lower teeth.

Every day after brushing and flossing, I squeezed a small amount of gel into each tray and popped them in for a couple of hours after dinner while watching TV (stops you snacking too, or indulging in that extra wine).

I had some sensitivity, but the tooth mousse in the kit neutralised that quickly. I'm super pleased with the brighter, whiter results and noticed them within days.

