

“HOW CAN I MAKE MY SMILE BRIGHTER?”

Pristine grins aren't just for the Hollywood elite. Follow our expert advice and get ready to flash those pearly whites. **by Kate Daley**

1 | IDENTIFY THE CAUSE

There are two different types of discolouration: extrinsic stains caused by things we consume (tobacco, coffee, tea, cola, red wine and berries) and intrinsic stains, where the dentin layer underneath the tooth is a darker shade than the enamel. Dentin comes in a wide range of natural colours, says Maryam Adibfar, a Toronto dentist and consultant for Procter & Gamble, “and as you get older your teeth naturally get darker.” All types of stains will respond to bleaching, but some will take longer than others. Luckily, there are many at-home treatments that you can try.

2 | BE RIGOROUS

One reason that teeth stain is that when plaque hardens, it calcifies, becoming tartar, which sticks. “So having a good oral-care regime at home, such as brushing, using a good toothpaste and a mouthwash, will help you keep teeth clean and reduce discolouration,” says Adibfar. She recommends using an electric toothbrush twice a day (it removes more plaque than a manual brush) for at least two minutes. Floss and use a bacteria-killing mouthwash to break down >>



ORAL CARE

- 1 | Sensodyne ProNamel Daily Anti-Cavity Toothpaste with Gentle Whitening helps to protect teeth against acids and prevent them from feeling sensitive (\$5, 75 mL).
- 2 | Life Brand Soft & Comfortable Dental Floss removes plaque below the gumline (\$4).
- 3 | Oral-B's Pulsaric electric toothbrush has a two-minute timer for optimal tooth polishing (\$80).
- 4 | Listerine Extreme Whitening mouthwash is a pre-brush rinse that helps you scrub away tartar and plaque when brushing (\$10, 946 mL).

plaque. Then, you can decide how frequently to treat your teeth — whitening toothpaste, floss and mouthwash can be used every day, while more intense treatments can be used every three to six months — depending on your preference and sensitivity, says Charles Botbol of Studio B Dental in Toronto. “It’s like dying your hair. If you don’t maintain it, the original colour will eventually come back.”

3 | MAKE AN APPOINTMENT

Before whitening, go for a checkup and have a thorough cleaning at your dentist’s. “You want to make sure that you’re working on a clean foundation,” says Adibfar. And don’t start using a new treatment until you ask

a professional if you’re a good candidate: Cavities, gingivitis and infections in or around your mouth may be aggravated by bleaching products.

4 | BRIGHTEN AWAY

Bleaching teeth may leave them feeling sensitive, says Adibfar. She recommends using a fluoride rinse after bleaching to help ease any pain, and treating your teeth less frequently if they remain sore. Also, limit your intake of liquids or foods that cause staining — they’ll counteract the whitening. If you aren’t seeing the results you want, consult a dentist who can help you figure out the source of the discolouration and recommend a solution, from in-office bleaching to porcelain veneers. ■

WHITENING STRIPS

1 | Rembrandt’s 2 Hour Whitening Kit consists of four treatments, for use within two hours, to get teeth gleaming (\$32, 2 tray applicators, 4 1-mL gel ampoules).

2 | Crest Whitestrips, Advanced Seal, adhere to teeth so you can talk or drink water while you whiten (\$50/14).



3 | Aquafresh White Trays use pre-filled containers to get your teeth whiter in three days (\$40, 7 top and 7 bottom trays).

4 | Life Brand Dissolving Whitening Strips have an anti-tartar agent, and they dissolve, so they create less mess (\$28/56).

5 | Rexall Premier Whitening Strips align with teeth to remove everyday stains (\$30/28).

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