Could teeth whitening improve

your oral health?

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**Q:** Will bleaching my teeth damage my enamel or gum tissue?

A: The truth is, teeth whitening is one of the most popular procedures in cosmetic dentistry, is completely safe, and may actually increase the health of your teeth and gums.

There are many methods available, such as toothpastes, bleaching strips, bleaching pens, bleaching trays, and in-office laser bleaching. Some are more effective than other methods, and some are more appropriate for certain lifestyles, but the fact is that teeth whitening works.

Virtually everyone who opts for a teeth whitening solution sees moderate to substantial improvement in the brightness and whiteness of their smile.

Dentally Speaking

Jeffrey S. Haddad D.D.S.

We are now learning that in addition to im-

## proving the appearance of your teeth the whitening process actually results in a healthier mouth.

A report featured on the cover of this month's *Journal* of the American Dental Association noted that applying the tooth whitener carbamide

peroxide through a custom-fit mouth tray might actually improve the overall health of one's teeth and gums. The report was based on a literature review and the authors' clinical experiences with specialneeds patients and tooth bleaching. Dentists have used carbamide peroxide for decades to whiten

teeth but its original use was as an oral antiseptic. It removes plaque, kills bacteria and elevates the mouth's pH above the point at which enamel and dentin begin to dissolve, which results in fewer cavities. "What we've noticed through whitening patients' teeth over the years is that as they bleached, their teeth got squeaky clean and their gingival health improved," said Dr. Van Haywood, professor in the Medical College of Georgia School of Dentistry and co-author of the report. The trick is in the tray, Haywood said. After a complete dental exam, the dentist can make the customfit tray that the patient can wear for approximately an hour during the day with the carbamide peroxide in it.

Standard oral hygiene. such as brushing and flossing, can be difficult or impossible for patients with mental challenges or impaired manual dexterity. Even without these disabilities, proper oral hygiene can be a struggle for many people. Additionally, when health problems or medications cause xerostomia (dry mouth), the lack of saliva reduces the mouth's natural protective mechanisms. These problems lead to plaque accumulation, cavities and periodontal disease, and could further impact the patient's health. Therefore, whitening with custom trays

could be a very effective supplemental method of oral hygiene for patients facing greater challenges keeping their mouths clean.

## **Teeth Whitening Benefits**

- Removes stains and dicoloration from coffee, tea, tobacco and aging
- Overall brightening of smile
- Removes plaque and bacteria
- Raises the pH of the mouth which can reduce the risk of cavities
- May improve gingival (gum) health

Teeth whitening has never been easier or more effective than it is today. In fact, home whitening trays are initially used for only two weeks, and for only 30-60 minutes per day. Our office has researched and tested the majority of the tray whitening systems on the market and has found the best combination of strength, ease of use, least sensitivity, and effectiveness for our patients. Even with our in-office Spadent laser whitening, we provide our patients with custom-made trays for followup home use. We recommend a whitening "booster" 1-2 times per year which entails only a one day tray application. All of the whitening procedures we provide in our office have little to no sensitivity, and allow the patient to use their trays at home for these "touch-up" treatments. Not only can whitening your teeth increase your confidence and brighten up your smile, we now know it may also improve the health of your mouth. This is just one more reason why you should consider teeth whitening for vourself.

Jeffrey S. Haddad D.D.S. of Doolin & Haddad Advanced Dentistry completed his dental education at the University of Michigan in 2001. Dr. Haddad is a fellow of the prestigious Las Vegas Institute for Advanced Dental Studies. He lectures nationally on cosmetic dentistry, TMJ disorders and practice management.

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