



# Helping Hands

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## TOOTH WHITENING OR BLEACHING

Over the past two decades, tooth whitening or bleaching has become one of the most popular esthetic dental treatments. Most in-office and dentist-prescribed, at-home bleaching techniques have been shown to be effective, although results may vary depending of such factors as type of stain, age of patient, concentration of the active agent, and treatment time and frequency. The American Dental Association (ADA) has advised patients to consult with their dentists to determine the most appropriate whitening treatment, particularly for those with tooth sensitivity, dental restorations, extremely dark stains, and single dark teeth. Additionally, a patient's tooth discoloration may be caused by a specific problem that either will not be affected by whitening agents and/or may be a sign of a disease or condition that requires dental therapy. Please be advised that bleaching does not affect the coloration of any existing restorations. Restorations present may need to be replaced if bleaching is pursued, in order to obtain satisfactory esthetic results.

Most bleaching products dispensed through dentists' offices, as well as professionally applied in-office bleaching products, have received the ADA Seal of Acceptance, which means that the product has met ADA guidelines for safety and effectiveness. No over-the-counter products have received the Seal of Acceptance. Over-the-counter bleaching products are not endorsed by the ADA because the organization believes that professional consultation is important to ensuring safe and effective use. So, the ADA recommends that if you choose to use a bleaching product, you should only do so after consultation with your dentist.

Two side effects that occur most often when bleaching are a temporary increase in tooth sensitivity and mild irritation of the soft tissues of the mouth, particularly the gums. Tooth sensitivity often occurs during early stages of the bleaching treatment. Tissue irritation most commonly results from an ill-fitting mouthpiece tray rather than the tooth-bleaching agent. Both of these conditions are usually temporary and disappear within one to three days of stopping or completing treatment.

The forms of whitening/bleaching that we recommend in this dental office are in-office micro abrasion, custom-made bleach trays and bleaching solution, in-office purchased disposable bleach trays and over-the-counter whitening strips, which is the only OTC method of bleaching that is recommended after a consultation.

Please be advised that bleaching DOES NOT affect the coloration of any existing fillings or restorations. Restorations present may need to be replaced if bleaching is pursued, in order to obtain satisfactory esthetic results.