

Talking with Patients

Tooth-Whitening Toothpastes

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WHAT IS IT?

Tooth-whitening toothpastes are toothpastes that contain small amounts of peroxides or abrasive particles. The products containing abrasive particles are designed to remove stains from the surfaces of teeth. Peroxide-containing toothpastes contain low concentrations of oxygen-releasing ingredients that are intended to provide a mild bleaching effect to teeth.

Tooth bleaching is time and dose related. Therefore, owing to the brief contact time and the low concentration of peroxide in most tooth-whitening toothpastes, only minimal whitening can be expected from these types of toothpastes.

WHEN IS IT NEEDED?

Tooth-whitening toothpastes can be used to remove mild, superficial stains and to help prevent further staining. More significant intrinsic discolorations are better treated with in-office bleaching or dentist-supervised home bleaching treatments. These treatments use much higher concentrations of peroxide-containing materials and are far more effective in obtaining substantial tooth whitening. However, tooth-whitening toothpastes can be used in combination with, or as low-dose maintenance after com-

pletion of a dentist-supervised whitening treatment, to help maintain the bleaching results.

CONCLUSIONS

Tooth-whitening toothpastes are effective for removal of superficial stains and for providing a mild whitening effect. Tooth-whitening toothpastes that contain small amounts of peroxides also might

ADVANTAGES

- remove superficial, mild stains
- prevent accumulation of stains
- safe for the tooth and gingiva when used correctly

DISADVANTAGES

- might be abrasive to tooth enamel if used excessively
- not as effective as professional whitening techniques

help maintain the whiter appearance of the teeth after a bleaching treatment. Patients who smoke; drink coffee, tea, or red wine; or consume other staining foods will benefit most from these whitening toothpastes. It is important to emphasize, however, that tooth-brushing with *any* toothpaste is helpful in the control and removal of stains from the surfaces of teeth and in plaque removal. It should be noted that abrasive components found in some whitening toothpastes also can abrade enamel if used excessively.

The following photograph shows some of the commercially available tooth-whitening toothpastes accepted by the American Dental Association (ADA), which means that they have met ADA standards for safety and effectiveness.



Figure 1.