



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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Tooth Whitening: What You Need to Know Before You Brighten Your Smile

Ankeny, IA (July 15, 2009) -- Over time, adult teeth often darken due to changes in the mineral structure of the tooth. Tobacco use or drinking coffee, tea and other beverages can cause darkening, and certain medications can discolor teeth. These factors lead many adults to consider teeth bleaching to restore their once brilliant smiles.

“Before you whitening your smile, there are some risks associated with bleaching that you should discuss with your dentists – especially if you are going to use an at-home teeth whitening system,” said Ed Schooley, DDS, dental director for Delta Dental of Iowa. “While dentists cannot predict if a patient might have an adverse reaction to teeth whitening procedures, discussing these risks as part of a regular examination can help patients avoid undesirable consequences.”

Effective whitening depends upon the use of a custom-made bleaching tray, which only a dentist can fit properly. Also, without supervision and expertise, these materials can aggravate sensitive teeth and gums, or damage existing dental work, such as fillings and crowns.

If you do decide to whiten your teeth, you can take several approaches:

- Bleaching (at-home or in-office). Bleaching is a common and popular chemical process used to brighten discolored or stained teeth. Consult your dentist before using over-the-counter bleaching solutions, which alter the intrinsic color of your teeth.
- Whitening toothpaste. All toothpaste helps remove surface stains through the action of mild abrasives. “Whitening” toothpaste has special chemical or polishing agents that provide additional stain removal effectiveness. Unlike bleaches, these products do not alter the intrinsic color of teeth.

Take these preventive actions to keep teeth white and sparkling:

- Avoid nicotine, soda, tea and coffee, which stain teeth.

- If you do drink soda or coffee, use a straw to prevent discoloration of the upper front teeth or brush after consuming these beverages.
- Clean teeth carefully. This is especially important if you wear braces. Food particles can become trapped between the braces and teeth, causing discoloration as well as cavities.

Most research shows that in-office and at-home bleaching both substantially lightens the shade of the teeth. While undergoing teeth whitening procedures, you should continue your preventative dental treatments to maintain good oral health.

For more information on oral health go to the Delta Dental website, www.deltadentalia.com.

Delta Dental of Iowa is the largest and most experienced provider of dental benefits in the state. As a not-for-profit, Delta Dental of Iowa invests in oral health projects through the Delta Dental of Iowa Foundation that focuses on access to care, prevention, education and research. The Iowa company is a member of the Delta Dental Plans Association, a national organization of not-for-profit Delta Dental plans. The national association is the largest dental benefits carrier in the nation providing coverage to more than 51 million people in nearly 93,000 employer groups.

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