

# KILLINEY DENTAL

Family Dentistry For Every Age



## A PATIENT'S GUIDE TO TOOTH WHITENING

BY DR. GERALD M. O'CONNOR

One of the most frequent enquiries I deal with in my practice on a daily basis is tooth whitening. It's in the news, the magazines, on millions of blogs and adverts. Those pearly, Hollywood smiles stare back at you from billboards and posters, in their gleaming perfect way, taunting you about your own graying gnashers and generally pointing out one wizened fact—your teeth aren't as perfect as theirs.

Here's the low-down though; most of those smiles are not as you might imagine. They're not natural teeth after a quick one-hour power-whitening, but most likely veneers or crowns or a mixture of both. Or, heaven forbid, a little touch of photo-shop trickery...

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So the first point people must realize is the limit of their expectations: Tooth whitening is not a panacea for your dental woes, rather a single part of the arsenal that dentists use to create the best of smiles.

## THE POSTERS ARE NOT TO BE TRUSTED!

But it's not all bad. Tooth whitening is by far and away the single most effective and economic way to improve all your teeth in one fail swoop without you hearing the teeth-on-edge shrill of the drill. It's quick, painless and, for most, extremely effective in bringing the best out of your own natural dentition.

And this is the point most should remember. Whitening your teeth will only get them to a point your teeth will allow. If you want the perfect smile with a shade to the far end of dazzling, it's certain alternative options will be needed such as veneers or porcelain crowns.

## HOW IT WORKS

As you most likely know already, each of your teeth is made up of an inner dentine layer and a harder outer enamel layer. The basic function of enamel is to protect the teeth, whereas dentine communicates when things go wrong and can even set about repairing the tooth against decay.

When you put stuff in your mouth -- food, cigarette smoke, coffee, and so forth, another layer gradually forms on top of the enamel layer. This is called a pellicle film.

Most dental scalers can remove this layer, even toothbrushing is sometimes sufficient to take it away in patches. Hence why the more abrasive whitening toothpastes can make the claims they do. But overtime this film permeates the porous enamel crystals and settles deeper into the tooth. The result—discoloured teeth, yellowing enamel and a duller smile.

This is where the professional tooth whitening procedure comes in. In simple terms, whiteners use bleaching chemicals to get down into the tooth enamel and set off a chemical reaction (specifically, an oxidation reaction) that breaks apart the staining compounds.

Most tooth whiteners use one of two chemical agents: carbamide peroxide or hydrogen peroxide (the same stuff that will bleach your hair). When used in the mouth, carbamide peroxide breaks down into hydrogen peroxide and urea, which increases the tooth's permeability to oxygen resulting in the breakdown of those deep-set stain molecules in the enamel.

## WHEN THE MOLECULES GO, THE NATURAL WHITENESS OF ENAMEL RETURNS.



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## THE PROS

**Improved Appearance** - The primary goal of anyone interested in teeth whitening is to improve appearance. Teeth whitening removes stains and can make the teeth colour appear more unified.

**Youthful Look** - White teeth are often associated with youth and vitality. As children, we have naturally white smiles, but staining of teeth over time can diminish that look. Teeth whitening restores the youthful appearance of teeth.

**Improved Mood** - There are countless studies that prove that smiling can improve your happiness and self-confidence. The act of smiling alone releases endorphins and can make someone feel happier. With a white smile, you'll be likely to smile more, and that will improve your mood and might improve your relationships as well.

## THE CONS

The cost, of course, is an understandable impediment. It is not cheap, and you can find alternatives out there. But we have tried every system on the market and none will work as well as our professionally administered ENLIGHTEN whitening.

You need to be dentally fit before undertaking any whitening procedure. Broken or decayed teeth will need to be repaired, gums must be pink and healthy, any fractured or irreparable teeth will require removal beforehand.

This may sound like a long and winding road, but it is for your benefit. Cosmetic work lasts longest when the mouth and patient are ready to maintain it.

It is, however, not suitable for all. You must be over eighteen. Pregnant women are advised to wait until the birth of their child. People with excessive white spots, sensitivity, or multiple anterior crowns, bridges or implants, may need a different cosmetic approach.

Certain teeth are more resistant to the effect. Teeth with a grey hue, or little enamel, respond poorly to the whitening procedure. This can be predicted by your dentist, and alternative plans will be made in conjunction with the you to achieve your aesthetic outcome.

For those with composite/white fillings/crowns/veneers in their mouths you should realize that any shade change in your own natural teeth will not be duplicated in these.

All restorations within the aesthetic zone will need replacement, usually two weeks after bleaching when the shade has settled and chemicals present on the teeth as a result of bleaching have faded away. This can be costly and must be discussed and considered before undergoing any whitening procedures.

And remember, teeth whitening is NOT a permanent solution. The effects of teeth whitening only last for a limited time, as the factors mentioned earlier can re-stain the teeth over time.



# MAINTENANCE

Whether you use our home tooth-whitening system, or have your teeth bleached in house, you can help maintain the results by flossing and brushing daily. Also, avoid acidic and staining foods and beverages such as: black teas, coffee, red wine, sports drinks, sodas, berries, and dark sauces.

In addition, we can provide top-up syringes to be used in the trays we provided at a cost of €20 per dose. These can be kept for months and used as an adjunctive therapy for 1 or 2 days every 2-4 months.

On average professional whitening will last for about two to three years. The duration will however vary depending on the procedure used, the state of the teeth and the personal habits of the patient after the whitening procedure.

# FAQS

## Will it damage my teeth?

Enlighten uses a state-of-the-art version of carbamide peroxide gel which is proven to be safe for use in the mouth and, unlike many other whitening gels, Enlighten gel is pH neutral so it will not damage the surface of the teeth or harm the gums.

**CARMABIDE PEROXIDE  
HAS A PROVEN  
SAFETY RECORD**



### Are there any side effects?

All tooth whitening gels can produce some short-lasting tooth sensitivity, which can last until a few days after the whitening has finished. If the sensitivity is bad, we recommend using the desensitising buds provided in the whitening kit. Also, you might experience overnight dry mouth during whitening and some mild tingling of the gums until treatment is finished.

### How white will my teeth go?

Everyone is different in this regard. It depends on the specific porosity of your teeth, the original shade, and how dutiful you are in following the instructions. In general, ENLIGHTEN whitening can lighten teeth by up to 16 shades. In all my years of dentistry, I have never seen anyone who we deemed suitable for the procedure disappointed at the end of their ENLIGHTEN treatment. If you are unhappy, however, we offer a money back guarantee at the end.

To summarize, whitening your teeth is an extremely effective way of improving your smile. It's relatively pocket friendly considering the cost of the alternatives, mentally untaxing, and gentle when done in the correct manner. Results can be quick and wonderfully rewarding for those who have been self-conscious about their discoloured teeth.

It's always a pleasure to show the patient the mirrored results of their treatment, and send them off with a little more bounce in their step and a bag full of goodies to maintain their new and noticeably wider smiles. And on that note, I'll let you go. If you would like to discuss tooth whitening with myself or any of our staff, please contact us on 01 2859067.

Patient 1 before treatment



Patient 1 after ENLIGHTEN



Patient 1 before treatment



Patient 1 after ENLIGHTEN



## DR. GERALD O'CONNOR BDS NUI (HONS)

Dr Gerald O'Connor qualified with honours from University College Cork in 1998, where he achieved his Bachelor of Dental Surgery degree and was awarded the Kerr Prize for Restorative Dentistry. Following his qualification, he spent 6 years gaining experience in a dental clinic in Essex before buying his own practice in 2004. Dr O'Connor quickly added a second location in 2006 and formed the Oak Dental Group.

After returning to Ireland in 2013, he set up Killiney Dental with his long-time partner Rosemarie. Gerald has a wealth of experience in dentistry with a vested interest in modern, evidence-based solutions. He enjoys implementing new dental treatments that are minimally invasive for patients without compromising their desire for an idealised smile. Dr O'Connor currently serves on the Irish Dental Association's Quality and Patient Safety Committee. In his spare time, he enjoys films, music, fiction writing and being anywhere in sight of the sea.



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## OPENING

Mon-Fri: 8:30-18:00  
Tue: Open until 9pm  
Sat: By Appointment

