

the RIGHT COLOUR to *Smile* in



THIS MONTH, WE TAKE A LOOK AT TOOTH DISCOLOURATION AND HOW IT CAN BE FIXED

Smile. What colours do you see? Is the colour right, or have your teeth gone all Technicolor, or a grainy black and white? Colour, as you will know, is a major factor related to the aesthetics of teeth. The first colour of deciduous or baby teeth is milky white, hence the term milk teeth. As we grow up, our milk teeth are replaced with denser, slightly more yellow permanent teeth. This natural shade, however, is at risk of losing its shine to a variety of factors.

CAUSES OF TOOTH DISCOLOURATION:

Extrinsic Staining

1. Food and drink: Coffee, tea, soft drinks and red wine may ruin your teeth's natural colour
2. Smoking and tobacco use damage the teeth as well as the lungs
3. Oral hygiene: Discoloration is just a minor side effect of inefficient dental care
4. Medicated mouthwashes containing chlorhexidine gluconate

Intrinsic Staining

1. Drugs: Antibiotics such as tetracycline can cause discoloration in children whose teeth are still forming
2. Dental Fluorosis: Fluoride is incredibly important in preventing tooth decay. But too much fluoride can lead to dental fluorosis, a condition that causes white spots or lines to form on the teeth
3. Trauma: Chipped teeth or broken teeth can darken due to enamel damage or a dead nerve
4. Tooth decay is often evident in brown or black spots on teeth
5. Genetics and aging: Some people are just born with discoloured teeth, and unfortunately most people's teeth will not age gracefully. Everyday wear and tear will contribute to tooth discoloration and over time this will lead to very dark teeth

Dental Treatment


1. Dental fillings: Large grey amalgam tooth fillings and old yellowish composite fillings
2. Gold inlays

3. Old crown/bridgework: grey margins at the gum line or exposed metal due to design of prosthesis

4. Denture: metal dentures with visible metal frameworks and clasps

PREVENTION AND TREATMENT

- Oral hygiene.
- Ultrasonic cleaning
- Teeth whitening
 1. Home kits: Your dentist can provide you with custom-made tooth whitening trays to wear at home. These trays are formed from a mould of your teeth, and hold a gel containing peroxide, the active agent. Worn daily, at-home bleaching trays can whiten teeth in a few days. Trays are kept for maintenance top-ups
 2. Laser tooth whitening: This method uses a peroxide gel to lighten teeth in the dental office in about an hour. After the gel is applied to teeth, a laser uses heat to activate the teeth whitening agents, with excellent results in a shorter amount of time
- Cosmetic Dentistry
 1. Dental fillings/restorations: Replacement of old-looking dark-coloured fillings into natural tooth-coloured composite resin or porcelain fillings
 2. Dental veneers: Veneers may partially cover frontal tooth discoloration. Simultaneously, porcelain veneers are also brilliant at correcting broken teeth, or straightening slightly rotated teeth
 3. Dental crowns: These are similar to veneers, but crowns fully cover discoloured teeth. Changing old metal-ceramic crowns or bridges into all-ceramic metal-free prostheses will completely correct the aesthetics and eliminate those grey margins along the gum line once and for all. The colour may be chosen to match the adjacent natural tooth colour or may be made to look ultra-white – the latter not always looking natural
 4. Conversion of metal frameworks into plastic dentures or complete elimination of dentures and conversion into tooth or implant-supported prostheses.

There is no reason why you should not want to smile wholeheartedly. Do not let your discoloured teeth keep you back from smiling or reduce your self-confidence. The solution is out there – just ask your dentist. 

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