

## Teeth Whitening: Celebrity Dentists' Tips for a Brighter Smile

How to reveal pearlier whites for summer, according to top dental experts

By Emily Hebert | July 01, 2010 9:00 a.m.

Have you recently inspected your smile in the mirror, only to discover that it's lost its pearly-white appeal? Here, top dentists reveal tips and tricks for brightening your teeth.

### Don't Slack on Oral Care

Besides getting a professional cleaning every six months, brushing your teeth with a whitening toothpaste twice a day is the obvious first step toward achieving a brighter smile. "Though they don't contain enough peroxide to actually whiten your teeth, whitening toothpastes are great at removing plaque and superficial stains," says Jennifer Jablow, DDS, who cares for the gorgeous grins of Ford Models' hottest faces (think fashion frontrunner Chanel Iman). Jablow also recommends brushing with an electric toothbrush to banish icky film from teeth ("Sonicare is my favorite brand—the sonic waves break down plaque and reduce the puffiness and inflammation of the gum tissue").



Jablow suggests swishing a whitening rinse around in your mouth to reach any places your toothbrush missed. Just be sure to steer clear of mouthwashes that contain alcohol, which can dry out the mouth, resulting in bad breath and a lack of bacteria-busting saliva. Another detrimental mouthwash ingredient: cetylpyridinium chloride (CPC). When used in a colorless rinse, the antibacterial effectively draws coloration and staining away from the tooth. But if artificial color, like mint green or cinnamon red, is present in the mouthwash, CPC actually attracts this color to the tooth "and makes it stick," says Jablow.

### Eat and Drink Wisely

Chewing sugar-free gum that contains plaque-reducing xylitol has the added benefit of promoting salivary flow, says Elisa Mello, DDS, "which will clean your teeth and break down any remaining food particles in the mouth."

Mello also suggests eating crunchy fruits and vegetables to naturally exfoliate teeth. Strawberries are a particularly great choice, she says, because besides teeth-scrubbing fibers they also contain malic acid ("this breaks down stains"). Her DIY cleaning recipe: Crush strawberries into a fruity purée and rub the mixture along the surface of teeth.

Fruits you shouldn't let remain on teeth: types like lemons, limes, and grapefruit that are high in citric acid. "You have to be careful, because these fruits can erode enamel away," says Debra Glassman, DDS, whose star followers include Leighton Meester and Jennifer Hudson. "Never suck on lemons or limes that you put in your ice tea." When drinking tea or coffee, Glassman also recommends swirling water around in your mouth afterward and swallowing ("this will remove any dark residue and keep it from building up and penetrating the tooth").

## **Try an At-Home Teeth Whitener**

Just as skin has pores, so do teeth. And once stains penetrate the surface layer, they can clog the pores of your not-so-pearly whites. If you're craving a whiter smile than what your regular teeth-cleansing routine gives, an over-the-counter whitener could be the solution. With peroxide concentrations ranging from seven to nine percent, at-home treatments go a step further than your average whitening toothpaste and mouthwash.

"Peroxide is the basis for just about any whitener," says Jablow. "Once it comes in contact with teeth, it breaks down into oxygen and water. The oxygen molecules open the pores and go deep into the tubes of teeth to pull out stains."

Most experts agree that Crest 3D White Whitestrips are the best DIY offering because of their direct, prolonged contact with teeth. "With paint-on formulas, your lips collapse immediately after application because you can't keep your mouth open for five to 10 minutes while the peroxide breaks down," says Jablow. "Instead of whitening your teeth, you'll be ingesting full-strength peroxide, which can result in a sore throat and irritated gum tissue." Besides Crest's popular strips, another alternative is Jablow's own Intelliwhite Pro Whitening Kit which, though a paint-on system, utilizes patent-pending "bleach bumpers" to keep peroxide in place.

## **Get the Star Treatment**

If your teeth aren't responding to over-the-counter whiteners as well as you'd hoped, pump up the peroxide and invest in a pro whitening treatment. "With in-office whitening, the concentration of peroxide is between 25 and 35 percent," says Jablow. "A UV light is used to activate components within the whitening solution, which helps speed up the process."

"The procedure takes 45 minutes—three consecutive sessions with a whitening gel that's changed between each 15-minute cycle," says Glassman. "With a professional treatment, you'll be able to get your teeth eight to 10 shades whiter. We say eight to 10 because depending on how porous the teeth are, some people will see whiter results than others."

Though Glassman says that the UV light employed during treatment can decrease sensitivity, both she and Jablow recommend desensitizing teeth in the weeks before. Jablow instructs patients to brush with Sensodyne toothpaste, which contains potassium nitrate. When brushing teeth, this desensitizing agent is released from the toothpaste into the tubules of the teeth, where the potassium ions depolarize the nerve and inhibit it from firing when overly stimulated. Regular brushing twice a day, every day, can build up the level of potassium near nerves, providing ongoing protection.

Glassman relies on another desensitizing agent, fluoride, to keep her clients' teeth protected during whitening. Like potassium nitrate, fluoride works to calm and sedate the nerve area. "The fluoride contains positive ions and attaches to the tooth to create a barrier," says Glassman. "It builds up near the nerve where the whitening gel could otherwise seep into and acts as a sedative. With fluoride, the gel won't penetrate deep within the nerve—it will only penetrate enough to get the stain out." A fluoride rinse to try: Colgate Phos-Flur Anti-Cavity.