

Your secret to stunning A whiter smile

FIRST surveyed top cosmetic dentists for the age-specific advice guaranteed to make you look younger and healthier

Research proves what common sense dictates: whiter teeth instantly make women look younger and healthier. And according to a Crest-sponsored survey, women with high-wattage grins are perceived as more confident, professional and outgoing. (A bonus for job hunters: In the same study, women were 58 percent more likely to be hired post-whitening and they received higher salary offers.)

With perks like these, it's no wonder a recent survey by the American Dental Association revealed that patients ask their dentist more questions about tooth whitening than any other topic. But you don't need to pay hundreds of dollars for expensive in-office whitening procedures: Dentists themselves point out that enlisting a little pro know-how can ensure home bleaching products achieve the perfect shade of white with none of the potential complications like sensitivity or lingering stains.

That's why FIRST consulted the leading dental experts to learn the tips, techniques and product picks that are sure to deliver the age-appropriate, personalized care you'd expect from a pro—but

in the comfort of your own bathroom and for a fraction of the cost.

How to keep stains from sticking

Professionals zap stains from teeth with lasers, lights and high-tech gadgets that would make 007 jealous, but some of the best methods for keeping your grin gleaming are decidedly low-tech. A tip from Jennifer Jablow, D.D.S., a cosmetic dentist in New York City: Snack on crudité's before eating a meal. Apples, pears, celery and cucumbers contain high levels of the plant fiber cellulose, which adheres to teeth and serves as a natural stain shield, she explains. These foods also gently polish teeth to loosen surface stains when eaten post-meal. Or chew sugar-free gum, which stirs up saliva to neutralize the tarnishing agents in food.

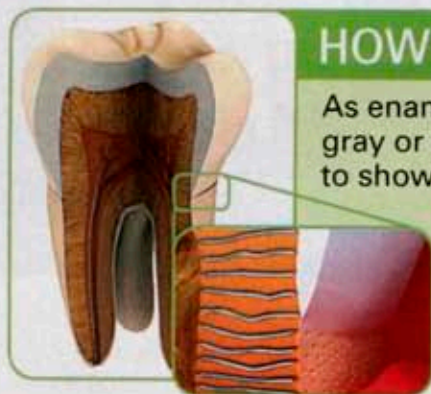
Another helpful tip: Limit contact with the worst offenders—coffee, cola, red wine and berries. Sipping staining beverages through a straw prevents discoloring pigments from touching front teeth, but when that's not practical, Jamie Sands, D.D.S., a cosmetic dentist in Valley Village, California,

What's your perfect shade of white?

"Your eyes offer a guide to the shade that will look most natural," says Nancy Rosen, D.M.D., a cosmetic dentist in New York City. "If your teeth are brighter than the whites of your eyes, it will look off." Still, she acknowledges, "I've never met a patient who thinks her teeth are white enough." So to up the dazzle factor, consider wearing cool shades of lip gloss like rosy pinks or plum reds to offset any hint of a yellow or brown tinge.

suggests pairing would-be stainers with a swoosh from a glass of water.

The dynamic duo of brushing and flossing is also a powerful defender against plaque and the stains it attracts. Before brushing, Dr. Jablow suggests rubbing floss across the surface of teeth like a squeegee, in addition to moving it up and down between crevices. (Try **Oral-B Satinfloss Dental Floss**, \$4, at drugstores, which earns raves from people with sensitive gums and tight teeth.) Then, for superior results, consider brushing with the **Colgate Motion Battery Powered Toothbrush** (\$8, at drugstore.com). This is an updated version of an oscillating brush that *Consumer Reports* found removed 75 percent of plaque—on par with a brush that costs 14 times as much.



HOW TEETH BECOME VULNERABLE

As enamel is worn down or damaged, dentin (the gray or yellowish layer beneath the surface) begins to show through. This results in a dull tint that can become more discolored over time. Dentin is also home to thousands of tiny tubules that lead to a tooth's nerve center. When the enamel is thin, these tubules and the nerves beneath are more prone to sensitivity.

at every age:

IF YOU'RE UNDER 35...

Your enamel is strong, so you're able to repel stains and keep your smile bright with daily upkeep, assures Colleen Olitsky, D.M.D., a cosmetic dentist in Jacksonville, Florida. However, she cautions that it's easy to go overboard with abrasive toothpastes, which can create tiny scratches that collect stains. Instead, limit the use of pastes containing polishing agents like baking soda to once a week, or consider a whitening formula that doesn't contain harsh abrasives like **Jasön PowerSmile All-Natural Whitening CoQ10 Tooth Gel** (\$8 for 6 oz., at drugstore.com).



To fight dimming: "Tooth sensitivity is higher for people in their twenties than any other age group because the enamel layer is still in the process of hardening," says Jason Feng, Ph.D., manager of product formulation for the tooth-whitening system Go Smile. To toughen up teeth, brush daily with a toothpaste containing potassium nitrate like **Sensodyne ProNamel Toothpaste** (\$6 for 4 oz., at drugstores).



This desensitizing agent seals the tubules that lead to nerves. For extra protection, use a fluoride rinse daily for a week or two before bleaching. "Fluoride remineralizes the tooth surface and decreases sensitivity," Feng says.

When you are ready for bleaching, strips are a great option for the low-level staining seen on people in this age group, says Dr. Olitsky. The peroxide sits directly on teeth for maximum effectiveness. Try **Crest Whitestrips Advanced Seal** (\$23 for a two-week supply, at amazon.com, where it rates four out of five stars).



Colleen Olitsky, D.M.D., 34, cosmetic dentist, Jacksonville, FL

Spot-on whitening

When sensitivity is an issue but major staining isn't, Dr. Olitsky suggests using a product with 5 to 6 percent peroxide and a pen or brush applicator, like the **Listerine Whitening Pen** (\$13, at drugstores). She explains: "This lets you focus the bleach so you can avoid hitting sensitive areas."



Flip for your smile-beautifying Rx