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Tooth Bleaching

Tooth bleaching has become one of the most popular esthetic dental services offered to patients. Many changes have occurred in this process during the last 30 years. From power bleaching with a heat lamp to today's laser bleaching techniques. Bleaching of live teeth can be done in the office by the dentist using high concentrations of hydrogen peroxide, or HP, or at home by the patient using lower concentrations of carbamide peroxide, or CP. The at-home agent is applied in a thin, comfortable tray worn through the night or for limited periods during the day.

The advantages of the at-home technique include ease of application, reduced chair time and cost, high success rate and safety of the bleaching material. In the past, tooth sensitivity during overnight use may have been another reason to choose day-time at-home bleaching. A very limited few of my patients have reported to me that they experienced mild sensitivity during a prescribed week-long, first-time; active bleaching period, but this sensitivity disappeared even before the bleaching period ended. I have only encountered one patient in seven years who experienced moderate sensitivity to cold and sugary foods lasting seven to ten days following cessation of the week-long bleaching regimen.

Gee Whiz Fact: *Use of CP can be traced back to World War I, when it was used by soldiers in the trenches as a very effective anti-inflammatory antiseptic to treat "Trench Mouth". Trench Mouth (now called Acute Necrotizing Ulcerative Gingivitis or ANUG) is a highly painful bacterial infection of the gums (gingiva) usually brought on by the combination of high stress and dental neglect. The brave men returning home from war who suffered from this debilitating disease usually had the Trench Mouth under control and had bright white teeth.*