



FDI POLICY STATEMENT

Bleaching Materials and Tooth Whiteners

Adopted by the FDI General Assembly: 26 August 2005 Montréal, Canada

Introduction

Dental bleaching materials and whiteners are intended to remove both intrinsic and/or extrinsic tooth stains. Professional in-office tooth whitening products have been used in dentistry for more than a century. In contrast, at-home tooth whitening products intended for patient use under limited professional supervision were introduced to the dental profession in 1989. There are 2 types of professional bleaching or whitening systems that are currently available for treating natural teeth, 1) in-office whiteners administered by dental professionals or 2) home-use products that are issued to patients for in-home use under the dentist's supervision. Currently, the most commonly used professional formulations are gel preparations of hydrogen or carbamide peroxide.

In recent years a variety of over-the-counter (OTC) products, formulations and delivery systems have been introduced to the profession and general public. There is ongoing controversy and confusion as to whether whitening products should be regulated as cosmetic or therapeutic devices; or if dental bleaches and whiteners should be sold directly to the consumer or used without direct professional supervision.

Statement

FDI supports the appropriate use of professional in-office tooth bleaching procedures. Dentists are urged to complete a comprehensive examination to assess the patient's oral health conditions, needs and desires prior to initiating any tooth-whitening treatment. Peer-reviewed studies indicate that peroxide-containing tooth whitening products are considered safe and effective when the products are formulated and used appropriately. Dentists and patients should consider the following

- Products vary in formulation, strength, dosage and the mechanism of treatment.
- Specialized devices such as trays, heat sources, lights and lasers may enhance the effectiveness of some professional bleaching products.
- To maximize benefits and minimize risks, individuals should seek professional guidance to determine if bleaching is suitable for their specific conditions.
- The most common side effects from tooth bleaching are transient tooth sensitivity and soft tissue irritation during or immediately following treatment.
- The long-term effects from higher concentrations of whiteners on the dental pulp, dentin, enamel and oral soft tissues remain unclear.

Reference

Dahl JE, Pallesen U. Tooth bleaching – a critical review of the biological aspects. *Crit Rev Oral Biol Med* 2003; 14: 292-304.