

WHICH WHITE IS RIGHT? (PART 2)

In-office internal whitening is rarely done and only used for individual teeth that have darkened as a result of trauma and subsequent root canal therapy. The oxidizing agent used in this case is different from all other whitening, and is left inside the tooth for several days or weeks. The results are very predictable, although duration varies by individual (sometimes a year, sometimes several years). Cost is usually \$250-500/tooth.

In-office external whitening is usually the most effective for whitening all of the teeth over the shortest period, but it is also the most complicated and thus the most expensive. Best results (comparable to 10-14 days of at-home whitening), usually takes 2-4 appointments of one hour, and each session will cost anywhere from \$400-1000. I always do this procedure in combination with custom trays to take home. Trays supplement the in-office visits and allow you to continue at-home whitening as long as needed. In-office whitening is always a good "boost" to the take-home whitening, but is not necessary for maximum results.

At-home methods vary, and so do results. Dentist-supervised custom flexible plastic trays with "professional strength" whitening gels are the most dependable if used according to instructions. This usually involves an initial consultation with a 20 minute visit to make moulds for the trays, a 20 minute visit to fit the trays and demonstrate proper use, and a short follow-up visit. Gel strengths can be adjusted to individual need, and the custom trays will last many years (makes maintenance applications easier). Tooth cleaning is not usually included in the price, but we offer a "Whitening polish" of the surfaces to be bleached for an additional \$45. I also give a 50% discount if the whitening is done in conjunction with any adjacent restoration or veneering procedures, or a wedding special. The cost at our office in 2013 is \$400, which includes the custom trays, first supply of whitening gel, and follow-up visits.

Any whitening will require at least annual maintenance (3-4 days with custom trays), and you will need to avoid any dark staining foods or liquids as much as possible. I like whitening because it develops and reinforces an appreciation of the value of a nice smile. That's good for you and me.