

MAVERICK HEALTH

A newsletter devoted to student health at Minnesota State University, Mankato

Spring 2007

The “tooth” about Teeth Whitening

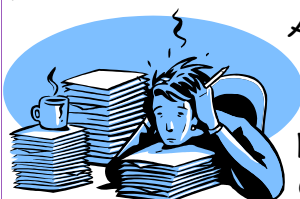
Teeth whitening has become one of the most common cosmetic procedures in the United States. It doesn't take much to figure out that Americans like their teeth white—walk down the dental product aisle in any department store and you'll see a multitude of products that promise “a whiter smile.” Dentists also advertise teeth whitening services. But have you ever wondered about teeth whitening products? Do they really work and are they safe? The American Dental Association provides some very helpful information to help consumers sort through choices.



- Two kinds of over-the-counter (OTC) teeth whitening products are available and are generally safe and effective: whitening toothpastes and peroxide-based whiteners
- In-office whitening, done in a dental office, involves a bleaching agent in combination with light, a laser and/or heat, and measures to protect the gum tissue. Whitening done in a dental office typically provides a faster, more dramatic result.
- At-home whitening supervised by a dentist allows a person to use some of the dental office procedures at home.
- Side effects that occur from teeth whitening procedures include sensitive teeth and gum irritation. In some instances, the tooth sensitivity can be uncomfortable enough to require pain relief medication. Decreasing the treatment time and using a fluoride-containing toothpaste made for sensitive teeth may alleviate the discomfort.
- Teeth whitening needs to be repeated. How often will depend on the method used, the food and drinks consumed, and overall dental health. Most in-office whitening lasts longer than over-the-counter methods.
- If you choose to use an over-the-counter whitener, be sure the product you are using is approved by the American Dental Association and always follow the product instructions. Leaving OTC whitener on for longer than the recommended time may cause tooth sensitivity and gum irritation.
- Whitening products won't change the color of crowns, fillings, veneers and other dental work. Be aware that this might lead to uneven coloring.
- If you have questions about teeth whitening, consult a dentist.

Craving Caffeine?

According to Mayo Clinic, nine out of 10 Americans consume some type of caffeine regularly, making it the most popular mood-altering drug. Most people can consume moderate amounts of caffeine (200 to 300 milligrams = two or three cups of brewed coffee) with no harmful side effects.



And recent studies examining the health effects of caffeine found that moderate consumption of caffeine-containing beverages does not lead to dehydration and does not cause an increase in cholesterol. In addition, research being done at Duke University is showing that coffee drinkers are less likely to develop type 2 diabetes. Caffeine is not a harmless substance for everyone.

If you have questions about your own caffeine consumption, consult your doctor.

Secondhand Smoke in the Great Outdoors

While the health risks of indoor secondhand smoke, responsible for thousands of deaths in the U.S. each year, have been well documented not much is known about outdoor secondhand smoke. Researchers from Stanford University published results from the first in-depth study on how smoking affects air quality at outdoor cafes and patios, parks, and other outdoor locations. The study, "Real-Time measurement of Outdoor Tobacco Smoke Particles" appears in the May issue of the Journal of Air and Waste Management Association.

Lead author of the study, Professor Neil Klepis, reported that although outdoor tobacco smoke disappears rapidly, the closer one sits to a smoker the more likely the secondhand smoke exposure is similar to indoor level. "These results show what common sense would suggest—when you're within a few feet downwind of a smoker, you get exposed," explains Wayne Ott, co-author of the study. Even brief exposure to secondhand smoke may have adverse effects on the heart and respiratory systems.

The issue of outdoor secondhand smoke is particularly relevant since the Mankato city-wide ban on smoking in the workplace, including bars and restaurants, precipitated the building of outdoor patios and lounges at many bars. Legislation is pending for a statewide law banning smoking at the workplace. According to the American Non-smokers' Rights Foundation, more than 700 state and local governments have passed laws restricting outdoor smoking at playgrounds, building entrances and other public areas.

Minnesota State Mankato has a policy in place that prohibits smoking within 15 feet of all building entrances unless it is designated as smoke free (then smoking around the entrance is completely prohibited). The full policy can be read at:

www.mnsu.edu/acadaf/Resources/Policies.html

Helpful Hints for Healthy Skin

Although acne is often thought of as a normal occurrence of adolescence, many college-aged adults experience acne. Whether you experience an occasional pimple or you find yourself constantly working to keep acne under control, the following hints may prove to help your complexion:



- Gently wash your face with soap and warm water twice each day to remove oil and dead cells from the surface of your skin. No need to scrub (in fact, that might make acne worse!).
- Keep your hands away from your face. No matter how tempting to pick or squeeze, leave blemishes alone.
- Purchase lotion, make-up and sunscreen that are labeled "noncomedogenic." This means that what you are putting on your skin won't clog skin pores.
- Be sure to read the label of any OTC or prescription acne medication you are using and use them as directed. Using them in a way other than what is intended may make acne worse.
- There are many treatment options for acne so if your acne is not responding to over-the-counter treatments, work with a physician to find out about treatment options that might work for you.

Student Health Services

MINNESOTA STATE UNIVERSITY MANKATO

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