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PROTOCOL FOR TAKE-HOME TOOTH WHITENING IN MY OFFICE

DISCLAIMER: First, I want to make sure that the reader is clear that this is a report of how we do tooth whitening in my office, and it is not meant to imply that any other group endorses this method. I can only tell you that this is the method that we use, and it is working incredibly successfully for us.

TRAYS: We make our take-home bleaching trays from excellent impressions made with StatusBlue an A-silicone impression material from DMG Dental (this product is a substitute for alginate with better properties in my opinion). Reservoirs in whitening trays are not necessary, but we use them anyway. We also extend the trays on to the gingiva instead of scalloping the edges. This seals our trays, keeps the whitening material in the reservoirs, and prevents the whitener from oozing out on to the gingiva.

PRE-WHITENING: We suggest a complete prophylaxis before beginning the whitening process. We have all of our patients use a pre-whitener, Power Swabs, (formerly Pre-White and GRINrx Whitening Stain Remover Swabs) for 30 seconds prior to every application of the whitener. The pre-whitener contains aqueous chemical cleaners (solvents and detergents) that dissolve some of the debris on the enamel and, therefore, the enamel is significantly cleaned. Obviously, clean teeth will whiten easier than dirty teeth. Power Swabs also contains a surfactant (wetting agent) that helps keep the teeth hydrated so sensitivity is reduced to zero or near zero if used according to the timetable below.

WHITENING: We use hydrogen peroxide (or short duration carbamide peroxide) whiteners. The Power Swab is applied first. It cleans and wets the teeth, and then the whitener, already loaded in its tray, is immediately inserted. The whitener gel dissipates due to the surfactant in the Power Swabs, spreads out and permeates more evenly over the teeth, and now keeps the teeth moist instead of dehydrating them. In the rare instance when gingival irritation occurs, the tray can be cut back to a scalloped edge to avoid having the whitener contact the soft tissue.

ONE ARCH OR TWO?: We do something else differently in our office. We whiten one arch at a time, almost always the maxillary arch first. This method takes longer, but it gives the patient a control arch to see and appreciate how much they are whitening. As a result, they are very compliant with our instructions. They are also terrific marketers for whitening by our office since the dramatic difference they achieve between arches shows the effectiveness of what we are doing and is often shown off by the patient. And these patients are continually looking at their mouths, watching the changes, making observations, and therefore becoming more aware of the need for other cosmetic dentistry.

TIMETABLE: The first day, we suggest 30 seconds of Power Swabs and 15 minutes of whitener. Assuming there is no sensitivity after the first day (normal), on the second day we increase to 30 seconds of Power Swabs and a half hour of whitener. If there is still no sensitivity, continue with single 30-minute daily applications or increase to twice a day for faster results. If sensitivity occurs at any stage, skip a day and revert back to the next lower time. Thirty-minute applications can be reduced to 15 minutes, and 15-minute applications can be reduced to 10 minutes. (In very rare cases you might need to reduce to 5 minutes for a few days). Always use Power Swabs for 30 seconds prior to applying the whitener. The idea is to get the teeth lighter while keeping the patient happy, well cared for, and sensitivity free. Superb results can be achieved in 2 to 3 weeks per arch.

RESULTS: Spectacular. No sensitivity. Patient feels in control. Teeth get whiter without pain. Patients talk about what is happening and market your practice. More cosmetic dentistry is scheduled since more attention to the mouth is generated. Everybody wins !!!