

PROTOCOL FOR IN-OFFICE WHITENING

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When doing in-office bleaching, there are three goals:

- 1) Lighten the teeth quickly.
- 2) Cause no damage.
- 3) Prevent sensitivity.

In all of my years doing tooth whitening, I have never seen an in-office product work exceptionally well, for a long period of time, so I always recommend take home tray bleaching as a follow-up to the in-office procedures.

First and foremost the dental professionals must protect the patient from the powerful chemicals we are using. We use eye protection, cheek, lip and tongue retractors, and excellent gingival isolation. The latter is provided by using magnification while accurately applying photo-initiated block out materials to cover the gingiva that could be accidentally touched or sprayed with the whitening agents. Covering the gingiva so NONE of it exposed is mandatory. I carry that block-out material at least down to, and often well beyond, the muco-gingival junction of the teeth to be treated and one additional tooth posteriorly.

In my office, we use whitening products that do not require the use of a light to be effective and I make sure I explain that to my patients. The following procedures work just as well with products that do suggest the use of a special light. Pre-op photos are always taken.

POWER BLEACHING: The good news is that the pre-whitener Power Swabs work extremely well with power bleaching also. Whether or not you use a light source, power bleaching involves a dental professional applying a stronger whitening agent for a shorter period of time than when using trays. To shorten the time even more, while improving the results, just swirl the soaked Power Swab all over the surfaces to be bleached for 30 seconds immediately before each application of the whitening agent. I typically cut my time of exposure to the whitening agent down to three sets of 10 minutes each. It is amazing, but when I rinse the final coat off with cold water, the patients don't even wince, because the surfactant in the pre-whitener prevented the sensitivity that otherwise would occur due to dehydration.

I typically follow power bleaching with a week of take home tray treatment, thirty minutes a day, still using the Power Swabs for 30 seconds just prior to every application. (See my Protocol for Take Home Whitening.)

In rare instances, even with the pre-whitener, a few patients still get some sensitivity with 30 minute tray applications of peroxide whiteners at home. If this happens, I have the patient take the next day off from whitening and then just reduce the time to 15 or even 10 minutes at a time. This does extend the total time to get the whitening results we want; however, at least we can bleach these folks who otherwise would be unwilling to complete the process.

Don't forget to take post-op photos and keep them accessible along with the pre-op photos. At some time in the future you may want to remind the patient how far they have come, and the before and after whitening photos are a terrific form of reinforcement as well as marketing.