

Tooth whitening or bleaching for children

Information for patients, parents and carers

This leaflet explains more about tooth whitening or bleaching for children. If you have any questions, please speak to a member of staff looking after your child.

Confirming your child's identity

Before your child has a treatment or procedure, our staff will ask you to confirm their name and date of birth and check their ID band. If your child does not have an ID band, we will also ask you to confirm their address. If we do not ask these questions, then please ask us to check.

What is tooth whitening?

This is a treatment that the dentist can use to make the colour of your teeth whiter.

A clear gel (bleaching gel) is put inside the tooth or alternatively, we may ask you to apply the clear gel into a special gum shield (bleaching tray) at home. The bleaching gel used is normally 10% carbamide peroxide (Figures 1 and 2).



Figure 1. Example of clear bleaching gel



Figure 2. Example of bleaching tray

Consent

We must by law obtain your written consent to any operation and some other procedures beforehand. Staff will explain the risks, benefits and alternatives before they ask you to sign a consent form. If you are unsure about any aspect of the treatment proposed, please do not hesitate to ask to speak with a senior member of staff again.

Why has my child been offered tooth whitening?

Your dentist has recommended tooth whitening to improve the colour of your child's teeth. This may be because:

- the teeth did not develop properly, due to a tooth development defect
- the tooth has darkened because of dental trauma (injury) or following root canal treatment

What are the types of tooth whitening?

Vital tooth whitening

Your child's tooth is alive and has a brown or white stain or mark. This will usually involve placing a clear gel (bleaching gel) inside a special gum shield which your child will wear at home.

Non vital tooth whitening

Your child's tooth has had root canal treatment and is darker than the other teeth. There are two ways to improve the colour of your teeth:

- **Internal whitening:** The dentist will place the clear gel inside the tooth and you will need to come back a few times to get the gel replaced until the colour has improved.
- **Inside-outside whitening:** The dentist will make a little hole in the back of the tooth. Your child will place the gel inside a special gum shield and wear this at home. The clear gel will soak into the tooth from the front and back (into the little hole at the back of the tooth).

How long will it take?

This depends on the type of whitening treatment, the colour of your child's teeth and their ability to cope with treatment. It may take a few visits at the dentist. If using the gum shield at home, you may notice a difference within a few days. Sometimes it can take 4 to 6 weeks. Occasionally, whitening treatment alone may not be completely successful in improving the colour of your child's teeth.

What are the side effects?

- Sometimes the bleaching gel can cause gum soreness. This is usually temporary.
- The teeth may feel sensitive.
- Sometimes it is not possible to remove all the staining.
- The tooth may become darkened again and may need to be whitened in the future.
- Very rarely, damage to the root (cervical root resorption) may occur. This could weaken the tooth and increase the risk of it breaking
- White fillings may need to be replaced after the teeth are whitened as the filling may no longer match the colour of the tooth or teeth.

How can I prevent tooth sensitivity?

If your child already has sensitive teeth, the bleaching gel may make this feel worse. Your child could start to use a 'sensitive' toothpaste instead of their normal toothpaste. You could also place bleaching gel in the gum shield on one night, and this 'sensitive' toothpaste in the gum shield on the alternate night. Your dentist may advise your child to use a desensitising agent (Tooth Mousse) on alternate nights to the bleaching gel. It is also important that your child avoids acidic foods and drinks as these may make the tooth sensitivity worse.

Are there any alternatives?

Your dentist will discuss the other options with you. This may include:

- having no treatment

- polishing the tooth with a special polishing powder and paste (microabrasion)
- placing a white filling over the tooth to improve the colour

What will happen at the appointment?

This depends on the type of tooth whitening.

It may involve placing a special 'raincoat' (rubber dam) over your child's tooth while the dentist makes a hole into the back of the tooth and cleans it.

If a gum shield is required, it will involve taking a mould of your child's teeth. The lab then uses this mould to make a special gum shield (bleaching tray) for your child. This will be given to you at a different appointment along with the bleaching gel.

Instructions for use

1. The dentist will give you the special gum shield (bleaching tray) and syringes of the bleaching gel for you to take home (Figures 1 and 2 above).
2. Thoroughly brush and floss your child's teeth.
3. Remove the tip from the syringe containing the bleaching gel and place it into the deepest part of the tray corresponding to the teeth that are being whitened (Figure 3).
4. Squeeze a small amount of gel into each area. Do not overfill (Figure 4).
5. Place the gum shield over your child's teeth and push into place.
6. Remove any excess gel which may have flowed beyond the edge of the gum shield with a clean tissue or handkerchief.
7. Your child should wear the gum shield overnight.
8. In the morning, remove the gum shield and rinse the mouth with water. Brush the teeth as normal. Clean the gum shield with a toothbrush and soapy water.
9. Keep the gum shield in a box or cup with water.
10. Repeat this every night for the amount of time your dentist recommends.



Figure 3. Place bleaching gel into bleaching tray



Figure 4. Amount of bleaching gel needed to bleach

Note for inside-outside whitening:

If your dentist has made a hole into the back of your child's tooth, they may ask you to place a small amount of bleaching gel inside this hole as well as inside the gum shield. To help to place the gel easier, we recommend your child lies down on a comfortable surface (for example, a sofa) with their chin raised to the ceiling. An appropriate guardian can use a torch or phone light to help place the bleach into the hole

Your dentist will advise when your child should be wearing the gum shield, and how often you must change the bleach. You must clean inside the hole at the back of the tooth to prevent food or drink getting stuck. Please ask your dentist if you have any questions.

What will happen at the review appointment?

Your dentist will arrange a review appointment for you. Bring the gum shield **and** all the bleaching gel syringes provided (empty or full) with you to this appointment. The dentist will check the colour of the teeth and decide if further tooth whitening is needed. Your child may need multiple courses of bleaching to achieve a successful outcome.

Can my child eat and drink while the bleaching tray is in position?

Your child must not eat or drink while the gum shield is in place. It is also better to avoid highly coloured foods including curry, tomato, beetroot, pizza, tea and coffee.

Where should I keep the bleaching gel?

It is important to keep the bleaching gel out of reach of young children and in the fridge. The gel should not be exposed to heat, sunlight or extreme cold.

What if the bleaching gel runs out before my next appointment?

Please contact us to request an earlier appointment or advice from one of our dentists. Our contact numbers are below

Note:

It is important that you are aware of the current EU legislation surrounding tooth whitening products in the UK. Tooth whitening products should only be provided to you by your dentist. Normally, tooth whitening products cannot be used in children under the age of 18 years of age. However, the General Dental Council allows the use of whitening products in this age group only for the purpose of treating dental disease. Further information can be found on the GDC website:

https://www.gdc-uk.org/docs/default-source/what-is-the-legal-position/tooth-whitening-position-statement.pdf?sfvrsn=16f71e9_4

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about the information in this leaflet, please contact the Department of Paediatric Dentistry team. If your child has persistent bleeding, severe swelling or severe pain, please contact us. If out of hours or at weekends, please call NHS 111 or attend your local A&E department for advice.

Central Referral Office	020 3299 4988
Clinic Appointments	020 3299 3055
Secretary	020 3299 1681

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.kch.nhs.uk/patientsvisitors/patients/leaflets

MyChart

Our MyChart app and website lets you securely access parts of your health record with us, giving you more control over your care. To sign up or for help, call us on 020 3299 4618 or email kings.mychart@nhs.net. Visit www.kch.nhs.uk/mychart to find out more.

Sharing your information

King's College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust has partnered with Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust through the King's Health Partners Academic Health Sciences Centre. We are working together to give our patients the best possible care, so you might find we invite you for appointments at Guy's or St Thomas' hospitals. King's College Hospital and Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trusts share an electronic patient record system, which means information about your health record can be accessed safely and securely by health and care staff at both Trusts. For more information visit www.kch.nhs.uk.

Care provided by students

We provide clinical training where our students get practical experience by treating patients. Please tell your dentist if you do not want students to be involved in your care. Your treatment will not be affected by your decision.

PALS

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) is a service that offers support, information and assistance to patients, relatives and visitors. They can also provide help and advice if you have a concern or complaint that staff have not been able to resolve for you. They can also pass on praise or thanks to our teams. The PALS office is located on the ground floor of the Hambleden Wing, near the main entrance on Bessemer Road - staff will be happy to direct you.

PALS at King's College Hospital, Denmark Hill, London SE5 9RS

Tel: **020 3299 4618**

Email: **kings.pals@nhs.net**

If you would like the information in this leaflet in a different language or format, please contact our Interpreting and Accessible Communication Support on 020 3299 4618 or email kings.access@nhs.net