

# ***Carolina Smile Center***

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## **Facts about Cosmetic Tooth Bleaching: There 3 Different Ways to Bleach Your Teeth:**

**1. Purchase non-dentist supervised bleaching kits, paint-on gels, strips or toothpastes** – All of these products are available through your local drug store. Our experience with these products are that boil-and-bite trays created at home rarely fit with any degree of seal and most patients discover that much of the bleach placed in these ill-fitting trays leaks out within minutes or hours of application. These trays are typically more bulky than professionally constructed trays, and are generally more obtrusive and less comfortable to wear. Additionally, the less expensive bleaching gels typically lack surfactants (wetting agents) needed to yield favorable results, and are often thin and runny compared to professionally administered products. Our experience with paint-on gels has been dismal. To date, no literature is available to support that these systems even work at all, therefore we do not recommend them. We have had patients report success with Crest White Strips, but we routinely field complaints about the strips not adhering to the teeth (particularly with the lowers), and the fact that the strips only cover a limited portion of teeth depending on the width of your smile. As for “whitening toothpastes,” it is common dental knowledge that in order for teeth to bleach, sufficient concentration of bleach must come in contact with the teeth for a long period of time. Toothpastes neither have sufficient concentration of bleach, nor do they stay in contact with teeth for more than a few minutes, so it is not likely that these will generate noticeable results... even with continued use. **Typical range of costs: 20\$- 75\$**

**2. Professional nightguard or tray bleaching-** This technique for bleaching teeth has been around the longest, has been studied the most, and routinely yields the best results over time. This procedure involves making impressions of your teeth and gums, and the creation of vacuum-formed, ultra-thin, clear trays that fit snugly around your teeth. These trays are typically comfortable and nearly invisible from a normal speaking distance. Because these trays are custom fitted to your teeth, the bleaching material is less likely to leak out when wearing them. The professional strength bleaching gels selected by this office are chosen based on clinical efficacy (how well they work), speed of bleaching, and the minimization of post-operative sensitivity. Each proprietary formulation has surfactants for better wetting (less “spotting” due to poor wetting of the teeth), and have a viscous consistency that resists washing out of the tray prematurely. This technique employs the concept of using a lower concentration of bleach over a long period of time. Since most tooth stains are deeply embedded within the tooth, this longer period of bleaching is required to create the greatest change in color. Each patient is given a generic amount of bleaching material in their starter kit. Some patients will not need all of the bleach provided, others will require more product depending on the nature and color of their stains. Most will be satisfied with the results achieved with the generic kit. Touch-up kits (refills), are available without an appointment and can be purchased at the front desk at any time. **Costs in our office: Upper and Lower Starter Kit: 350\$, Upper Only Starter Kit: 200\$, Touch-Up Kits: 45\$**

**3. Professional Laser Bleaching** – This technique is the latest luxury in cosmetic tooth bleaching and is very popular for those who want results in a hurry, object to lengthy tray wearing sessions, or are looking to “jump-start” very dark teeth that would otherwise require months of tray wearing to see results. This procedure involves the use of high concentrations of bleach (5-8 times the strength of home bleaching) for short periods of time (usually 1 ½ hour sessions). The bleaching process is accelerated by activation with a high intensity light or laser and requires a clinical dental appointment. During this appointment, gums and soft tissue must be covered with special paint-on barriers to protect them from the high concentration bleach. Disposable soft tissue retractors are used to keep the lips and tongue out of the way and to permit access for the laser which shines on all the teeth in the mouth simultaneously. We currently use the Zoom! Bleaching System, which has been showcased on the national television show “Extreme Makeovers.” Patients receiving Zoom! treatments are required to wear trays for few hours over the next few days after the appointment to complete the bleaching process. These trays are included in the fee. Extremely dark teeth may require multiple Zoom! treatments. **Costs in our office: Single Treatment: Upper and Lower \$500, Two Treatments: Upper and Lower 900\$.**