



Looking to give your smile a little something extra?

There are many tooth whitening options to help get back your sparkling smile. But before you go for it, there are a few things you should know...

### How does tooth whitening work?

Most tooth whitening products contain a peroxide-based gel that coats the teeth and bleaches surface stains and stains deep within the enamel of the tooth.

### What options do I have?

There are several available, including tooth whitening...

**At the dentist**—After protecting your gums with a gel or shield, your dentist coats your teeth with a bleaching agent. Often dentists use a light or heat to speed up the bleaching process, for immediately visible results.

**With whitening trays**—Your dentist can make you a custom-fitted mouthguard to use with a bleaching solution and instructions to use at home, or you can purchase a “do-it-yourself” kit that usually requires you to heat the mouthguard and then form it to your teeth. After completely cooled, the trays are lined with bleaching solution and applied as directed.

**With a brush applicator**—Some store-bought tooth whiteners come in a bottle with an applicator brush which you use to coat your teeth with bleaching agent. The agent is left on your teeth for the recommended time period, sometimes overnight.

**With whitening strips**—Inexpensive and convenient, this is one of the most popular tooth whitening options. Flexible, thin plastic strips have a thin layer of peroxide-based gel and are designed to fold over your teeth. There are even some whitening strips made to dissolve in your mouth.

### What else do I need to know about tooth whitening?

The TRICARE Dental Program does not offer coverage for tooth whitening procedures, so be sure to consider your options before undergoing costly treatment. Also, crowns, bonding and fillings do not respond to bleaching agents, and can become more visible if the surrounding natural teeth are whitened. Some people experience tooth sensitivity with bleaching.

Remember, safety first—talk to your dentist and read manufacturer’s instructions before beginning any treatment!

**For information on the TRICARE Dental Program, or to find more “Dental Health 101” tips, visit us online at [www.TRICAREdentalprogram.com](http://www.TRICAREdentalprogram.com).**