



15 ways to whiter teeth

Take your choppers from dull to dazzling and give yourself something to smile about

If you've toyed with the idea of whitening your teeth but haven't actually done the deed, consider this: "Since teeth naturally yellow as we age, whitening them will automatically make you look younger," says Kim Harms, D.D.S., a practicing dentist and a spokesperson for the American Dental Association. What's more, a 2008 Columbia University study found that women with healthier-looking teeth earn more than those with less sparkling grins. Do you need any more reasons to whiten up?

How whiteners work

All bleaching methods use peroxide—whether in gel, strip, or liquid form—to dissolve surface stains, explains Debra Glassman, D.D.S., a cosmetic dentist in New York City. Teeth surfaces are made up of thousands of tiny dentinal tubules—hollow structures stacked horizontally, like thin straws.

They're extremely porous and absorb pigments from food and drink. (Anything that can stain a white T-shirt can discolor your teeth, Glassman says.) Peroxide bubbles into the tubules and lightens those pigments.

Before you bleach

A first-timer should always consult her dentist before trying any tooth whitener, even an over-the-counter product, because not all teeth

react to whitening the same way. Some types of dental work (like caps, crowns, and veneers) don't take to lightening because peroxide can't penetrate them. Stains caused by antibiotics, like tetracycline, are also tricky, because they can occur in the layers inside the tooth, which brighteners can't reach. Your dentist will be able to advise you about the best method for you.

If you go to a pro

The whitening agents dentists use are up to three times more powerful than at-home versions, so you'll see results faster than if you go solo. If you're looking for a dramatic, fast solution, consider power whitening: First, a protective rubber guard or barrier gel is placed over your gums to help avoid possible sensitivity to peroxide. Then the teeth are coated with a bleaching agent and a light is aimed at them to activate the ingredients. The procedure takes about an hour, and costs \$500 to \$700.

A cheaper (but slower) option: Your dentist can custom-fit you with plastic dental trays, kind of like retainers, which you fill with a peroxide gel and wear at home. You could see brighter teeth within a few days, though some people need up to four weeks to see results. Oh yeah, and it'll cost you \$250 to \$400.

SOUND OFF SHARE YOUR TEETH-WHITENING EXPERIENCES AT WOMENSHEALTHMAG.COM/SOUNDOFF

6

NUMBER OF NEW, WHITER SHADES DENTISTS HAVE ADDED TO THEIR PALETTE SINCE TEETH BLEACHING BECAME POPULAR IN THE 1990s.



Enbrightenmint BriteSmile whitener and lip gloss in Pearly Pink, \$26, sephora.com

JK Jemima Kidd Maxi Kiss Plumping Lip Gloss in Angelina, \$17, target.com

Sally Hansen Smile Brightening Lip Treatment in Brilliant, \$7, walgreens.com

SHINE ON

The blue undertones in these glosses give you a mega-white grin

No-tech tricks

If you'd rather pass on the peroxide, check out these other options to whiten your smile

BRING ON THE BAKING SODA

The refrigerator deodorizer also removes discoloration on your teeth. The abrasive particles polish the surface while a chemical reaction between baking soda and water lightens stains, says Jonathan B. Levine, a cosmetic dentist in New York City. (Warning: You can damage your enamel with the scrubbing, so don't do it more than once a week.) Just dip your toothbrush in the soda, or simply switch to a toothpaste that contains baking soda, such as Arm & Hammer Complete Care Toothpaste (\$4 for 6 oz, drugstore.com).

FEEL THE CRUNCH

"Foods that are high in cellulose—a strong starchlike compound found in celery, carrots, and apples—act as natural abrasives, cleansing teeth and removing surface stains naturally," says Jeff Golub-Evans, D.D.S., a cosmetic dentist in New York City. And greens such as spinach, broccoli, and lettuce contain mineral compounds that form a film over the teeth, so pigments from other foods can't stain.

BE A LITTLE SHADY

Want to make your teeth look fashionably white—without the work? "Stick with blue-based red and pink lipsticks or clothes in dark colors," says Pia Lieb, D.D.S., a cosmetic dentist in New York City. Warm colors (yellow, orange, brown, warm shades of red) worn close to your mouth will only bring out the yellow in your teeth.

★ WH TESTS IT AT-HOME BLEACHING

Which white is right for you?

It's been seven years since the first-of-its-kind Crest Whitestrips hit the scene. Today, almost 200 products are available. Where to begin? Look at our chart...

EASIEST TO USE

Rembrandt Whitening Strips
\$24 for 7 sets,
drugstore.com

RESULTS IN

Four days
> Slide the thin plastic film over your teeth and let the peroxide soak in for 30 minutes once a day.

PROS Comfortable to wear, and there's no goop to ooze out. One tester liked that these felt "sturdier" than other whitening strips.

CONS Testers noticed some sensitivity on their gums, but it went away in a couple of days; the flavor isn't the best.

MOST PORTABLE

Listerine Whitening Pen
\$13, drugstore.com

RESULTS IN

Seven days of regular use
> Swipe it over teeth three times a day.

PROS "There's really no way to screw up the application," one tester said. You can target any especially stained areas, and it's so convenient you can carry it around in your bag.

CONS It's hard not to become obsessed and whip it out any time you're in front of a mirror.

BEST FOR GAGGERS

Crest Whitestrips Daily Whitening + Tartar Protection
\$35 for 38 sets,
drugstore.com

RESULTS IN

About a week
> Thin plastic strips fit over top and bottom teeth. Wear them for five minutes at a time, once a day, until you're happy with your smile's level of whiteness.

PROS The strips help the peroxide stay in place. "I liked that I was also getting tartar protection," one tester said. And the five-minute time limit is good for anyone with a short attention span.

CONS The strips are saliva magnets and leave a slimy film on your teeth (the instructions tell you to brush it off). Testers noticed a "chemical" taste.

BEST FOR DAILY MAINTENANCE

Philips Sonicare HealthyWhite R732 electric toothbrush
\$120, amazon.com

RESULTS IN

One day
> Just like a regular toothbrush—use twice a day. A "clean and white" setting moves the brush side to side to remove stains.

PROS It takes no effort to incorporate into a daily routine. "I noticed how bright my teeth looked after the first use," one tester said. "My coworkers made comments on day two."

CONS The instructions can be confusing and advise working through a "sensitive" phase before moving to the "whitening" setting.

BIGGEST CHANGE

GoSmile Advanced Formula B1 ampoules
\$89 for 20 ampoules,
sephora.com

RESULTS IN

Two days
> Pop open the ampoule and swab on the whitening formula twice a day—no rinsing or brushing.

PROS No-mess application and a subtle minty flavor make this one of the most appealing options. One tester remarked that she couldn't even tell the whitener was on her teeth.

CONS You can't eat or drink for 20 minutes, which can be annoying and easy to forget about.

FASTEST RESULTS

Aquafresh White Trays
\$40 for 7 sets,
walgreens.com

RESULTS IN

One day
> Slip the prefilled trays over your teeth for 30 to 45 minutes once a day.

PROS The trays ensure that the peroxide makes contact with the teeth. The treatment is convenient, and the gel doesn't taste bad.

CONS The trays move easily, and you end up salivating like a St. Bernard. Thirty minutes is torturous when you have plastic crammed in your mouth.

BEST TASTING

Nature's Gate Whitening gel toothpaste

\$8 for 5 oz, drugstore.com

RESULTS IN

No change—2 weeks and counting

> Like any toothpaste

PROS Tastes fresh and minty; one user liked that it left her mouth feeling clean.

CONS It's a great toothpaste, but it doesn't do much whitening. (To be fair, no toothpaste does.)



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Q&A

The Doctor Is In

By Brunilda Nazario, M.D.

This Bud's for You

Are earbud headphones really bad for my hearing? —Kionna C., via e-mail

They can be. Because you place earbuds directly in your ears, they send more vibrations shooting down your canals. And since they produce good sound and are easy to carry around, you're more likely to listen for long periods—also bad for eardrums. But you don't need to deck yourself out like a DJ. Turning down the volume goes a long way toward protecting your ears, as does unplugging yourself from your iPod every so often. Many experts recommend the 60/60 rule: Use headphones for no more than 60 minutes a day, and keep the volume set at no more than 60 percent of max.

Keep Your Nose Clean

I heard that something called nasal irrigation can help clear up my allergies. What is that? —Allie B., via e-mail

Nasal irrigation involves spraying fluid—usually saline solution—up the nostrils using a Waterpik with a special adaptor or a nasal bulb, which looks like a mini turkey baster. The fluid helps wash away allergens such as pollen. Anecdotal evidence documents its success, and a recent study shows that irrigation is more effective than saline spray for short-term relief of allergy symptoms. If you want to try it to ease congestion and itching, do a twice-daily flush for three to six weeks. Blow your nose first, then fill the irrigator as directed and insert it just past the nostril (about the width of your pinky). Angle the spray toward the outside of each nasal cavity, aiming at the outer corners of your eyes.

In and Out

I threw up 20 minutes after taking my birth control pill. What should I do? —Jennifer S., Boulder, CO

If you puke more than three hours after taking a pill, your body will have processed it already—no need for damage control. But if you upchuck within that window, you should pop another pill as soon as you can (ask your doc for a back-up pack) and continue taking the rest of your pills as usual. Got a bad stomach bug that lasts for a couple of days? Reacquaint your partner with his condom stash or use another backup method of birth control, like a contraceptive sponge, for the rest of the month.

Womenshealthmag.com

/doctoris Submit your questions for Dr. Nazario, senior medical editor for WebMD Health, today.

armed to the teeth

» Defeat stains, plaque, and death breath with five new smile-saving tools

1 | Sonic Impact

Philips Sonicare FlexCare with Sanitizer (\$180, target.com)

WHY WE LOVE IT

Quieter and more energy-efficient than earlier Sonicare models, this brush comes with a storage chamber that uses UV light to zap up to 99 percent of germs. **EXPERT TAKE** "The sanitizer will keep the bacteria that tend to lurk inside your medicine cabinet from multiplying on your brush," says Debra Glassman, D.D.S., a cosmetic dentist in New York City.

2 | Great Whites

Glide Whitening Plus Scope Flavor Floss (\$4, walgreens.com)

WHY WE LOVE IT

This

practically unrippable floss—it's made from Gore-Tex—has a tingy Scope flavor and is coated with silica, a chemical that scours away stains.

EXPERT TAKE "Silica has a smooth texture that allows this floss to glide between the teeth to get at plaque and discoloration," says Kristy Menage Bernie, R.D.H., dental hygiene editor of dentalcompare.com.

3 | Dry Run

Sensodyne Oasis Moisturizing Mouthwash (\$6.40, drugstore.com)

WHY WE LOVE IT A stuffy nose, alcohol, and certain meds can dry out your mouth, but this mildly minty wash helps lock in moisture for up to two hours. **EXPERT TAKE** "One

in four adults suffer from chronic dry mouth," Glassman says. "This wash helps your mouth rid itself of bacteria and enamel-eating acid."

4 | Pro Choice

Crest Pro-Health Night Toothpaste (\$3.50, walgreens.com)

WHY WE LOVE IT Pro-Health has scored the ADA Seal of Acceptance for a whole host of oral-health claims. Ignore the name—this stuff is as effective in the AM as it is before bed. **EXPERT TAKE** "The active ingredient [stannous fluoride] weakens gingivitis-causing bacteria, helps strengthen tooth enamel, and protects against acid," Bernie says.

5 | Clean Sweep

Oral-B CrossAction Pro Health (\$4.50, drugstore.com)

WHY WE LOVE IT It's a tongue cleaner and toothbrush in one! Rows of soft criss-cross bristles stimulate gums and attack plaque from various angles; small nubs on the back of the brush head help scrape bacteria off your licker.

EXPERT TAKE "The benefit of a tongue cleaner is that it allows you to draw bacteria out of your mouth rather than just move it around inside," Bernie says.

WHAT'S IN THAT? REMOVABLE TATTOO INK

If Angelina and Billy Bob taught us anything, it's that tattoos can be cause for regret. Now scientists at Duke and Harvard universities have created a tattoo ink that can be erased quicker than it takes to fashion a necklace from a vial of blood. Unlike other inks, which may contain carcinogens and heavy metals, Infinitink is made of biodegradable pigment encased in tiny balloonlike structures. Under a laser, the structures pop, allowing the ink to be absorbed safely into the body. And instead of five to 10 painful laser sessions, tat removal takes just one treatment. You'll pay about 50 percent more for an Infinitink tattoo than you would for one with traditional ink, but being able to zap your ex's name off your arm? Priceless.



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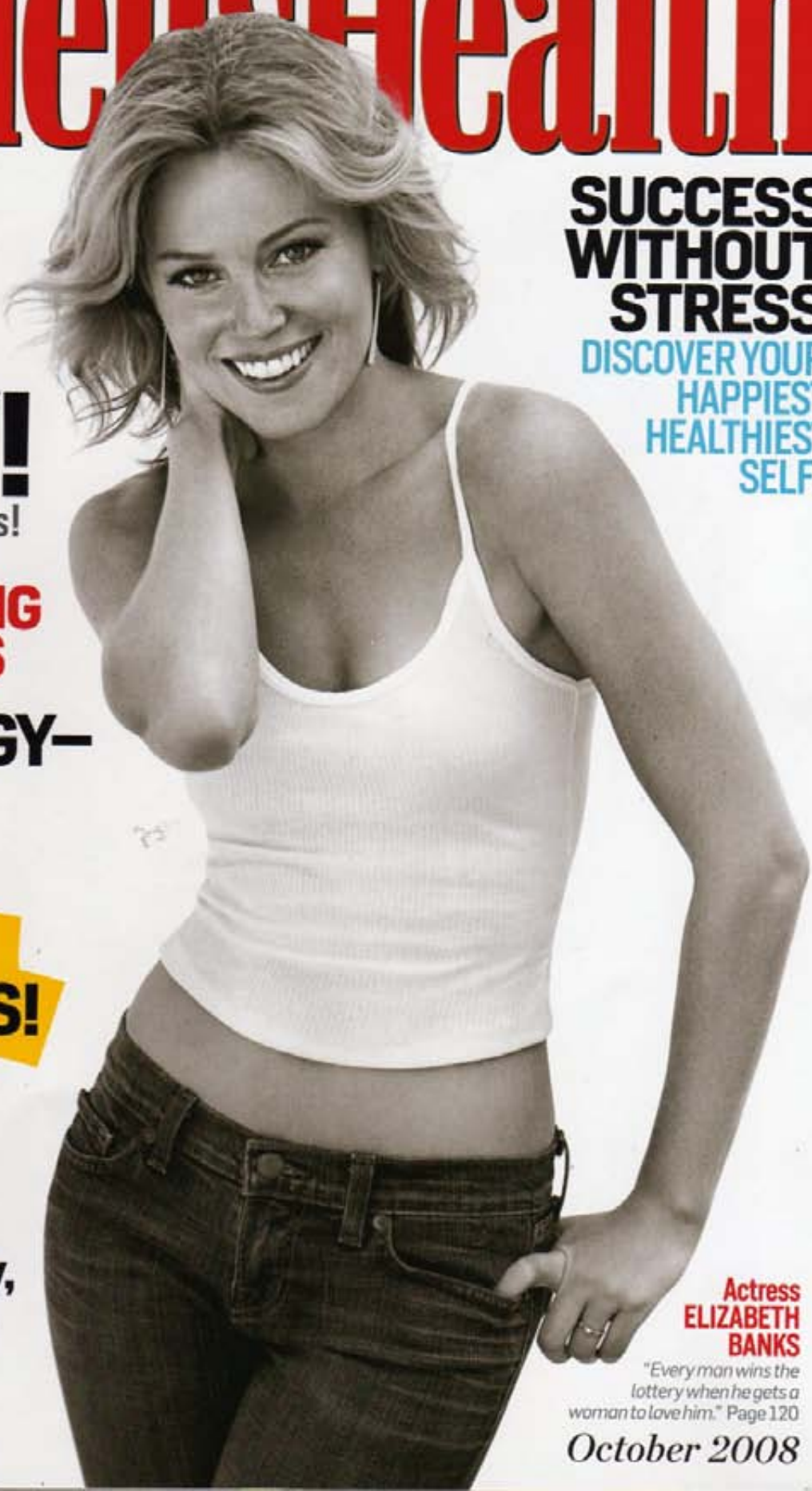
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**Actress
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BANKS**

*"Every man wins the
lottery when he gets a
woman to love him." Page 120*

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