

**General
Dental
Council**

protecting patients,
regulating the dental team

Considering tooth whitening?

**What you need to know before
committing to treatment**



The role of the General Dental Council

We, the General Dental Council (GDC), are the UK's dental regulator. Our role is to protect dental patients. By law, dental professionals must be registered with us to work in the UK and must meet our high standards.

We believe that tooth whitening is part of the practice of dentistry, and dentistry must only be carried out by dental professionals who are registered with us.

Before you have tooth whitening, you should always visit a dentist so they can assess whether treatment would be right for you. Registered dental hygienists and dental therapists can also carry out tooth whitening on the prescription of a dentist.

Tooth whitening can lighten the shade of your natural teeth, but before you commit to having treatment it's important you're fully aware of what to expect and what the risks are.



Questions to ask

If your treatment is going to be carried out immediately, don't be afraid to ask simple questions during your appointment. If there is time before your procedure, don't be afraid to do some extra research. Talk to other

patients who have received the same treatment or visit another dentist for a second opinion until you feel confident enough to go ahead with treatment. Always ask for a written treatment plan and price estimate.

You may want to ask some of the following questions.

- What types of tooth whitening are available and what are the differences between them?
- What sort of results can I expect?
- What can you do about stained veneers, crowns or dentures to make sure they match my natural teeth?
- What are the risks? Will it hurt?
- Who will be carrying out the procedure? What training and experience do they have?
- Is the work guaranteed for a certain length of time?
- What aftercare do you provide and who can I contact for advice after treatment?
- What happens if I am unhappy with the results? Who will pay for any work that is done to correct any problems?
- Who can I contact for advice after treatment?
- What kind of insurance do you have?

Check your dental professional is registered:

Website: www.gdc-uk.org

Phone: 0845 222 4141



8 out of 10

Eight out of 10 people choose to have tooth whitening done at a dental surgery and think it should only be carried out by registered, trained and qualified dental professionals.

Get in touch with us if...

- **Your tooth whitening was carried out by someone who was not a registered dental professional.**

75% of the people who responded to our survey said they thought we should prosecute anyone carrying out tooth whitening illegally. We investigate complaints and concerns and, where we have enough evidence, we prosecute people for carrying out dentistry illegally. We need your help to prosecute people who carry out dentistry illegally. Please call 0845 222 4141 or email illegalpractice@gdc-uk.org if you think someone is carrying out dentistry illegally.

- **Your tooth whitening was carried out by a registered dental professional but you are concerned that the treatment has harmed you, or the dental professional's behaviour was below the standard you expected or the standards we have set.**

You can find out more about the standards we set in our leaflet, 'Our standards and how they affect your care.' You can read a copy of the leaflet by visiting the 'Members of the public' pages of our website: www.gdc-uk.org

Anyone can report their concerns to us, but we only deal with certain types of complaints. Before getting in touch, read our leaflet 'How to report a dental professional to us'. Visit our website or call 0845 222 4141 for a copy.



The survey mentioned in this leaflet was carried out by TNS Research International with a sample of 1,021 adults. It was carried out in the United Kingdom in December 2010. Please see our website at www.gdc-uk.org for full details of the results.