

# How to ... keep teeth whiter

January 23 2009, By Alison Johnson

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Whitening strips and professional treatments aren't the only ways to keep your teeth pearly.

Whitening strips and professional treatments aren't the only ways to keep your teeth pearly. Here are a few tips from New Town Dental Arts in James City County, Va.:

- Keep teeth clean. Aim to brush -- or at least rinse -- right after eating, especially if you've had a food or drink that stains teeth easily (see below). Also floss daily and see a dentist regularly.
- Beware of big stainers. Berries, chocolate, coffee, tea, colas, root beer, red wine and tobacco are known for discoloring enamel, the hard outer surface of teeth. With darkening drinks, use a straw or swallow quickly to limit contact with front teeth.
- Crunch away. Hard raw fruits and vegetables such as carrots, broccoli and apples will help scrape away plaque, which makes teeth look dull.
- Supplement regular toothpaste. Use a whitening paste once or twice a week to remove surface stains. Or mix a paste of baking soda and water and brush with it a few times a week (but not daily, as the mixture is abrasive).
- Brush gently. Scrubbing too hard erodes enamel. Use a toothbrush with soft bristles and clean with light circular motions. Note: Electric sonic toothbrushes are especially good at stain removal.

- Get your fluoride. Make sure your daily toothpaste contains this mineral, which helps prevent decay. Ask your dentist about rinses or gels that guard enamel.
- Be a smart swimmer. If you're in a pool frequently, look into mouth guards that can protect against chemicals that may damage teeth.
- Freshen up. Depending on what whitening method you use, you may need a touch-up treatment every six months or so.

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