

FOCUS

ON DENTAL HYGIENE

TAKE CARE OF YOUR BRIGHT SMILE

The popularity of teeth whitening and cosmetic dentistry continues to soar as more and more people are putting their money where their mouth is to own a bright white smile. Once the work is done, a reliable maintenance plan is crucial to protect the investment for as long as possible. It's important to remember that maintaining that bright smile is a day-to-day task that starts at home.

Top 5 don'ts that can harm your smile:

1. Don't use an abrasive toothpaste

It's like using sand to clean glass. Abrasive toothpastes will dull the luster of your teeth, porcelain veneers, crowns and bridges, while increasing sensitivity. That's why toothpastes with a high abrasivity rating are not recommended for most people, especially those with delicate cosmetic work or those who frequently whiten their teeth. Even those who have not had cosmetic work should be leery of abrasive toothpastes because they can eventually strip away tooth enamel, which never grows back.

2. Don't use a tinted mouthrinse

The mind-numbing number of mouthrinses that line grocery and drug store shelves have one thing in common: They are all competing for your attention. Left alone to make the choice, most of us will choose a brightly colored mouthrinse because of the "shelf appeal." At least that's what the manufacturers want. Beware! Colorful dyes can stain your teeth, veneers, resins and other restorations. There is absolutely no benefit or purpose to add dyes and coloring to products except to attract attention. Use a clear mouthrinse — it's that simple.

3. Don't use mouthrinses that contain alcohol

Advertisers tell you that the "burn" is good. It's not. Alcohol has a drying effect,

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which can result in surface hardness and make your teeth less resistant to wear. Additionally, if you've had some cosmetic dental work done, such as veneers, etc, alcohol tends to dissolve bonding or the composite material that holds the porcelain to the tooth. Within a period of a couple of years, you could completely ruin the dental work. Always read the list of ingredients on any mouthwash — and steer clear of alcohol.

4. Don't forget the extras

Cosmetic dental work looks fantastic but brings its own challenges. Crowns, bridges and braces often harbor debris that is inaccessible to even the finest toothbrush or floss. This debris causes bad breath and sometimes gingivitis as pockets of bacteria form. Oral irrigators remove this debris and leave your breath fresher while reducing the likelihood of gum disease. Because irrigators reach areas a toothbrush can't, they are ideal for cleaning around crowns, bridgework, implants and braces.

5. Don't use a hard-bristled toothbrush

While you may think soft-bristled toothbrushes are not as effective, that's not the case. To minimize or avoid excessive wear and trauma to your mouth, use a soft-bristled toothbrush and change it frequently (typically every three months because they become worn and are less effective). Medium and hard bristles can actually damage your protective tooth enamel and dental restorations. For even more protection when you brush, be sure the bristles on the toothbrush you select have rounded tips.

Closing Thoughts

A beautiful smile says a lot. And it's one of the first things people notice about you. Don't take chances when it comes to maintaining and preserving your cosmetic dental work. When it comes to oral care products, make your choices carefully. Read the labels. Consult with a dental professional. And keep smiling!

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