

# BRACES AND TEETH WHITENERS

*Helping to make you more beautiful*

Jovel Johnson

**O**.K. You see a cutie from a far and you're checking the cutie out. Fortunately, the cutie is checking you out too. You wouldn't mind having a conversation with him/her and it's obvious that he's/she's thinking the same thing too. The cutie walks up to you and you feel confident that this person may be the one to walk down the aisle with. Then, the unthinkable happens - the cutie smiles. It's a ghastly scene straight out of a horror film. The cutie's teeth look like they were thrown in from a mile away and the colour looks like he/she hasn't seen a coffee brand he/she didn't like. That so-called cutie needs immediate help. Braces and teeth whitening can do the trick.

Braces have been used for many years to put teeth into their correct places. "Braces are metal brackets bonded to teeth to help straighten and put teeth back into place. They help put more teeth into better positions," said Dr. Otto Beck, Orthodontist at Tingrinner's Club Jamaica located in Kingston. He continued, "People wear braces because they want to look good and have a better smile. In order to have a beautiful smile,



your teeth have to be well aligned," he said.

He made mention of the types of braces, metal and porcelain. "They both are very effective in doing their purpose, the better of the two are the metal braces. The porcelain tends to break easier than the metal," Dr. Beck said that the cost of wearing braces depends on how long the treatment lasts. "The treatment can last up to two years and that can go for about US\$4,500 (about J\$270,000). It will be less for treatment that goes on for less time," he said. He also said that comfort depends on the individual, as each person has his or her own comfort level.

## DO'S AND DON'TS

As with any form of treatment, one has to be careful of how they deal with it, so as not to put the treatment in jeopardy. Dr. Beck gave some Do's and Don'ts when wearing braces:

- Don't eat hard or sticky foods. Cavities (holes in the teeth) will easily form when food stick to the braces. This can be due to not properly cleaning the braces.
- Don't chew on hard substances such as pens or pencils. This may help to break the braces.
- Don't drink a lot of soft drinks. This is especially for children. The sweets and sugars in the drink will help to form cavities.
- Do clean thoroughly every time after eating by using a soft or medium soft toothbrush.
- Do use oral rinses to clean both teeth and braces. These include fluoride and salt water.

There has been a lot of advertisement, especially on U.S. television, showing a stay at home, easy-to-use method of whitening your teeth and keeping them that way for long periods of time to get that beautiful and eye catching smile. It is marketed to be an alternative to the expensive, time consuming and nerve racking experience of visiting the dentist. But do they really work and are they safe? And how different are they from whitening your teeth at the dentist?

"Teeth whiteners are very safe, so safe, that we use them to prevent cavities. There was a concern in the past about the safety of the teeth whiteners. It was said that it would actually harm the teeth. But today, we see that's not true," Dr. Beck said. He said that some over-the-counter teeth whiteners work, while others don't. "There are some that should not be recommended and there are some that are very good, such as the Crest White Strips. They are very effective."

## HOW LONG WILL TEETH WHITENING LAST?

"People use to think and say that teeth whitening will stay for three weeks. It takes about three to six sessions to get teeth whitened - it varies. For that reason, people would prefer to do in-house teeth whitening because they don't have to come to the dentist more than once. If anyone asks me how long it will stay for, I will honestly tell them I don't know," Dr. Beck said. He also said that teeth whiteners don't work for everybody. "Someone may have a bad filling and decide to use the teeth strips, but the outcome isn't pretty because the teeth strips don't work with the filling," he said. He cites the differences in the over-the-counter whiteners and whiteners used at the dentist as the materials and concentration in the products. "What we use in the dentists' office is higher in concentration because we are in charge of the prescribed amount," he said.

Dr. Prerana Nallapati of Advanced Endodontist in Ocho Rios says that professional whitening is better than over-the-counter teeth whiteners because the whitening method best suited for the patient is administered under supervision after thorough examination for problems associated with old fillings, cracks, crowns, non-vital teeth, and X-Rays may also be needed to check for signs of infection and unusual wear of teeth, as all these factors influence the outcome. However, she does recommend over-the-counter teeth whiteners. "If used carefully, these are effective to a certain extent, however, patients who have tried them are not usually fully satisfied and may need professional help," she said. She said that professional whitening lasts from one to three years and as the teeth are exposed to stain producing foods; they may get darker again, depending on the frequency. "You may require a touch up for maintaining the brightness," Dr. Nallapati said.

**When you're smiling the whole world smiles with you.**

**Join Dr. Noel Dalrymple & The Jamaica Dental Association in promoting Oral Health Month.**

**Good Oral Health - A Necessity for Life.**

**Dr. N.L.S. Dalrymple. B.D.S.U.S.A.**  
 Member of the International College of Implantologists  
 Member of the International College of Prosthodontists  
**Dental Surgeon**

**66 Main Street, St. Ann's Bay St. Ann**  
**Fax/Tel : 972-0086**

## Facts on teeth whiteners

**T**he main ingredient of teeth whiteners is different concentrations of a mixture of hydrogen peroxide and urea called carbamide peroxide.

### HOW DO THEY ACT?

When the whitening gel comes in contact with saliva, hydrogen peroxide is released which is a strong oxidizing agent that can remove stains by oxygen release mechanical cleansing. Your dentist prepares a mould of your teeth, thereby making sure there is uniform and complete contact of the bleach to your teeth.

### ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES

The advantages are obvious, but when done under professional supervision, it is very safe and side effects may be sensitivity of teeth which usually does not last long.

There are four types of bleaching:

1. At home whitening: Here, the dentist prepares a special tray to fit your teeth and gives you a kit to use at home.
2. Power bleaching: Here, higher concentrations of bleach are used and in the office, special lights or laser can be used to speed up the whitening process. The advantage is you see the results immediately.
3. Internal bleaching: Bleach placed inside a tooth after a root canal treatment. It is usually done when your teeth get darker after a fall or injury.
4. Over-the-counter products: A wide variety is available to choose from, such as Crest White Strips and the paint on version Crest Night Effects, also Colgate Simply Whitening Gel.

### CONDITIONS THAT CAN IMPROVE

Teeth discoloured from aging, food products like coffee, sodas, tea, red wine and smoking usually show excellent results after professional teeth whitening. Tetracycline stains and fluorosis may show fair improvement.

### MOST COST EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT METHOD

*Continued on page 21*