

In today's cosmetically conscious world, most people value a bright white smile. People wonder why teeth darken and what factors may exacerbate or prevent discoloration. The following are the most common culprits:

Drinking coffee and smoking cigarettes are the two major causes of tooth discoloration. Rinsing with water after drinking coffee will lesson staining. Other dark colored drinks such as tea, fruit juices, red wine and soda can also stain teeth. To offset these stains drink water, brush or eat raw vegetables as soon as possible.

Colored foods such as blueberries, cherries, cranberries, beets, and soy sauce stain teeth. Brushing as soon as possible after eating these foods will help solve this problem.

Excessive ingestion of fluoride can cause spotted or mottled enamel. Use a sensible, pea-sized amount of toothpaste when you brush. Have your well water tested for fluoride content.

Some medications can discolor teeth. The antibiotic tetracycline is not given to children as it can cause permanent blue-gray staining of adult teeth. Other medications may elicit temporary yellow or green stains. Discuss concerns with your dentist or physician.

Genetics determines the thickness of tooth enamel and the intensity of whiteness of teeth. Aging often causes enamel to wear thin, revealing the natural yellow or brown color of the underlying dentin. Traumatic injuries to the teeth may result in discoloration. Dead and root canalled teeth often darken.

Improper oral hygiene may result in discoloration and decay when foods are not removed from teeth. The bacteria in dental plaque may create yellow or green stains or damage the surface of the tooth enamel. Brushing twice daily with fluoride toothpaste, flossing once a day and having regular professional cleanings and examinations at your dental office is the healthy routine to take care of your teeth. Chewing sugarless gum can decrease the incidence of dental decay by increasing the production of saliva and mechanically washing food and stains from your teeth.

Tooth whitening is one of the most economical ways to enhance your smile. Today there are a variety of products and procedures available to brighten your smile. Your dentist can perform a thorough evaluation of your individual needs, concerns and goals determine which procedures will be most effective for you.

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