

By Kathleen Collins, D.D.S.



Eliminating Tooth Discoloration

There are basically two types of tooth staining or discoloration: extrinsic (external), which affects teeth from the outside; and intrinsic (internal), staining built into the structure of the tooth itself.

Extrinsic staining occurs because the microscopic pits, fissures and defects in the outer surface of tooth enamel are susceptible to the accumulation of stain-producing substances, including certain foods and beverages - particularly, red wine and tea with high tannin content, any form of tobacco, chromogenic (color or stain producing) oral bacteria, and topical medications.

Intrinsic staining may arise from certain dental filling materials, next to adjacent tooth structure or the condition of the tooth itself. For example, if the tooth is largely replaced by a silver amalgam filling, or if it has had a root canal filling, it may have a different color than the adjacent teeth.

Treatment options can include diet and habit modification (i.e.



elimination tobacco use, modifying or eliminating the consumption of certain foods, improving oral hygiene, and getting a professional tooth cleaning and polishing). Teeth discolored by dental caries (decay) or dental materials require the removal of the decay or restorative material, followed by proper restoration of the tooth. Bleaching (tooth whitening) is a technique that is a safe and relatively easy way to brighten stained teeth, and is used to treat many types of tooth discoloration.

As with any dental condition, it is important to discuss your concerns with your dentist. With your motivation and his or her expertise, you should arrive at a therapy that can reduce or eliminate your discoloration problem.

For more information on this topic, please contact Kathleen A. Collins, D.D.S. by phone at (714) 887-0444 or visit www.surfcitysmiles.com.



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