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better health

TRY THIS AT HOME

Swish a couple of tablespoons of unrefined coconut oil around in your mouth for 5 minutes a day. This is known as 'oil pulling' and is said to help whiten teeth naturally.

show the *white* stuff

Nothing says healthy, confident and sexy like a bright smile. Ready to flash yours?

Have your pearlys been looking a little less than lustrous lately? Coffee, red wine, cola, even dark berries and foods like beetroot and chocolate can stain your teeth over time. As for smoking? Fuhgeddaboutit. Teeth with an off-white or greyish hue also tell tales about your age. As we grow older, the top layer of protective tooth enamel becomes thinner, revealing more of the naturally yellower dentin beneath.

So... just let it go?

Uh, no thanks. Fortunately, lightening up is easy. You can DIY it with over-the-counter toothpastes, gels, strips and rinses. They're a safe and effective way to remove superficial stains and can give great results with a little time and perseverance. Look for those specifically

designed for whitening. They'll contain active ingredients including baking soda and hydrogen peroxide. Try Colgate's Optic White range.

Want it white now?

If you're after a faster, more dramatic fix, an 'in chair' treatment with a dental pro is the way to go. The popular Philips Zoom

WhiteSpeed process promises to get your chompers up to eight shades whiter in one 90-minute session. Impressive, right? Here's how it works: hydrogen peroxide gel is applied to teeth then activated by LED light in 15-minute sessions. The intensity of the light can be controlled, making it accessible for those with sensitivity.

Pearls of wisdom

For more information and prices, ask your dentist about in-chair and other whitening services. *BHG* readers can access a special offer from the Pitt Street Dental Centre - call on (02) 9223 4767 or visit pittsdentalcentre.com.au.

Struck by whitening

Following whitening treatment, you'll need to stick to a 'white' menu, avoiding foods and drinks that stain for at least 48 hours as teeth will be porous. The following tips will also help you achieve and maintain a beautiful, bright smile:

- Drink your daily water target.
- Become a cleaning, flossing demon.
- Chomp on foods that promote saliva production - celery, carrots, apples.
- Chew sugarless gum.
- See your dentist for regular check-ups.
- Give up the ciggies!

DID YOU KNOW?

Healthy gums and teeth also offer you protection against heart disease. Get on it!

