

Ask the Experts

IN-OFFICE BLEACHING

Guest Editor

Bruce R. Matis, DDS, MSD*

QUESTION: We are hearing so much about in-office bleaching procedures. What science-based evidence is there about their effectiveness?

ANSWER: A recent survey reported that 48% of dentists in the United States provide in-office bleaching services.¹ Although this degree of use implies effectiveness, there is always a question of scientific support of the claims made by manufacturers for various in-office products and techniques.

In-office bleaching was the first accepted method of lightening teeth. As at-home bleaching materials were developed, they gradually supplanted in-office techniques in a high percentage of practices. Recently, however, there has been a marked increase in advertising and promotion of in-office bleaching, with particular emphasis on the application of light to enhance the procedure.

Numerous studies have indicated that the use of light activation has almost no effect on the lightening procedures with various in-office materials.²⁻⁴ Only one published

clinical study has compared the efficacy of at-home versus in-office bleaching.⁵ It compared an in-office bleaching product with an at-home product, both of which had been accepted by the American Dental Association (ADA). The at-home product, used for 2 weeks, was significantly more effective than the in-office product, which was applied three times at three separate appointments.

In our Clinical Research Section at Indiana University School of Dentistry, we have accomplished a pilot study on eight of the most frequently used in-office products. None of the in-office products was as effective, at any point in time, as an ADA-accepted 10% carbamide peroxide at-home product used overnight for 2 weeks.

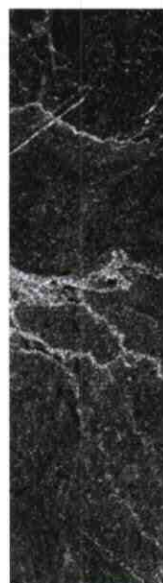
Surveys have been conducted to determine respondents' acceptance of in-office and at-home bleaching procedures. Dental practitioners surveyed responded that 73% of those who had at-home treatments were "very satisfied" with the results. In contrast, only 40%

were "very satisfied" with the results of in-office bleaching.¹

Is there a place for the in-office bleaching procedure? Of course! It is an acceptable method of bleaching for those patients who need rapid whitening of their teeth or for those who do not want to use trays, strips, or paint-on products. However, when dentists perform an in-office bleaching procedure, they should recommend the subsequent use of an ADA-accepted at-home product to boost the bleaching result and charge accordingly.

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Editor's Note: If you have a question on any aspect of esthetic dentistry, please direct it to the associate editor, Edward J. Swift Jr, DMD, MS. We will forward questions to appropriate experts and print the answers in this regular feature.

Ask the Experts

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