



HOW TO GET A KNOCKOUT GRIN

The urge to have brighter teeth is reinforced every time we turn on the TV or flip through a magazine.

"Every hour of every day, my patients bring in pictures of celebrities," says Dr. Golub-Evans. Radiant stars like Regis Philbin and Vanessa Williams set blinding standards, making ultra-white teeth a big business. The trend has even spawned a group that dentists call bleachaholics, who try every new drugstore method. Bleaching removes stains and dries out the enamel, "which gives a whiter, more opaque color," explains Laurence Rifkin, D.D.S., a dentist in Beverly Hills, California. "Soon, teeth rehydrate, returning to a natural, translucent shade" (leaving only your wallet permanently lighter). Which brings us to our public service announcement: Consult a dentist before trying even drugstore whiteners. Also consider cost, how long you'll wait for results and how much effort you can put in.

If you have little money and lots of time Whitening toothpaste, brushes and mouthwash

These should really be called *brighteners*, not whiteners—their mild abrasives or bleaches help regain your natural level of white by removing stains but are not on teeth long enough to lighten enamel. **These are for you if** you're too busy to add a single step to your daily grind. **We tried** ● Crest Rejuvenating Effects toothpaste or gel, \$2.50 to \$3. Most testers were fans. The taste was "very pleasant, not medicinal," though one tester found it too sweet. Another's teeth felt "as good as after a professional cleaning!" As for brightening: One user didn't notice any, although several others did. ● Supersmile Professional Whitening System, \$20. A mixed response to this toothpaste and whitening "accelerator" in dual tubes: "My gums hurt so I had to stop," said one tester. But from another: "My teeth seem cleaner with no pain or unpleasant effects." One found it tricky that the two pastes "would separate" during brushing. ● Aquafresh Whitening Advanced Freshness Toothpaste, \$3. Like other pastes we tried, this one didn't give an idea of when to expect results. Our instant-gratification-seeking tester "didn't notice an effect after a week, so I went back to my old whitening paste." ● Jason PowerSmile Whitening Toothpaste, \$5. Mixed reviews: Traditional paste users may find that less foamy natural pastes take "a little getting used to," as one tester said. The consistency was "like cold cream" but "we like it a lot," said a couple who noticed brightening. Another described the taste as medicinal. ● Mentadent White & Clean Brush, \$3. This "super brawny" brush ratcheted up results. Our testers loved the "smooth" feeling it left. ● Rembrandt Intense Stain Removal Mouthwash, \$6. "It tasted so strong, I was scared," one user said. "But it works." A java junkie user was attracted by the label's claims (removes stains "caused by coffee, red wine, smoking and tea"). Initially she couldn't rinse the full recommended minute.

Most whitening toothpastes (like Aquafresh Whitening Advanced Freshness Toothpaste, \$3) help you maintain your natural brightness between cleanings.

Whitening floss contains silica or cleansers to polish nooks and crannies that other whiteners can't reach. **This is for you if** you want every square millimeter to be ultra-white. **We tried** ● Johnson & Johnson Reach Whitening Floss, \$4. Testers were fairly positive. One called the taste "minty fresh." Another report: Teeth "felt exceptionally clean, even the next day." However, a couple didn't notice any whitening. ● Supersmile Whitening Floss, \$6. Good reviews: "I liked it," said a tester. "My teeth are a tiny bit whiter in between."

If you have some money and some time

Whitening strips The plastic stick-on tabs sold in drugstores feature a premeasured dose of peroxide-based gel to be used 30 minutes twice daily for 14 days. **These are for you if** you're even-toothed and able to take a daily half-hour vow of silence (strips can garble speech). **We tried** ● Crest Whitestrips, \$40 for a 14-day supply. Despite side effects, these gained fans. "Ouch! Where's the Sensodyne? My teeth hurt," said a user who nevertheless admitted "they *do* look whiter." In answer to claims that you can shop and work while wearing the strips, a tester said, "You can see them on my teeth; I wouldn't wear them in public!" Another user preferred this "best whitener I've ever tried" to those "clunky trays."

Paint-on whitening gel A peroxide-based gel sits on teeth for 30 minutes twice daily for two weeks. **This is for you if** you want to give teeth individual attention. Bonus: You can use bleaching time (when you can't eat) to break that nasty snacking habit. **We tried** ● Colgate Simply White, \$15 for a 14-day supply. Reactions were largely positive. The taste is "bearable." Testers warned: While effective, it takes time to apply the gel and dexterity to hold lips off teeth. One tester said that where it sticks, it works very well. "Drooling," however, "is a weird side effect."

Premade bleach-tray kits These drugstore-sold mouthpieces come with bleaching solutions of varying strengths. Wear them 15 to 30 minutes per day for one or two weeks. **This is for you if** you have a high-threshold gag reflex and a lonely car commute (you really can't talk in-process). **We tried** ● Mentadent Tooth Whitening System, \$19 to \$23. The consensus: effective but tedious. One tester with a busy schedule couldn't find time to wear them. Another did and found her teeth "incredibly clean and especially smooth." ● Rembrandt's Quick White Disposable Bleaching Kit, \$20. This worked, too, but it *took* work: The throw-away foam



Just add teeth (clockwise from top): Supersmile
Professional Whitening System, \$16; Jason