



**Bite**

# Word of mouth

22 OCT 2013

Featured

## Paper or pearly white?

The old expression 'pearly whites' likens human teeth to the colour of pearls because of the era in which this phrase was coined. At the time, pearls were not cultured and tended to have more of a creamy, silky white appearance. As the description suggests, teeth are not naturally paper white; in nature, very few biological materials are. So why the sudden desire for aesthetically enhanced white teeth today? And what happens when teeth whitening goes wrong?

The colour of teeth is determined by the thickness of the enamel covering the crown of the tooth and the yellowness of the underlying dentine, which makes up the bulk of the tooth structure. The combination of these two tissues is what gives the teeth their "pearly white" appearance.

With age, adult teeth can become darker due to the gradual thinning of enamel, allowing the dentine colour to show through.

### So why this desire for white or bleached teeth today?

The face is clearly important for communication, recognition and social interaction. Along with eyes, teeth and gums are key features of the face. Showing more or less of them can invoke expressions ranging from full-on aggression to high-spirited laughter.

As with the desirability and acceptability of other bodily displays, there are fads, fashions and cultural diversity in what might be

considered aesthetically pleasing teeth.

Many of us know (or can remember) older members of the family or friends who wore full dentures, following the removal of all of their teeth. This was relatively common during the first half of the twentieth century.

Invariably, these artificial tooth forms were aligned, often at the insistence of the recipient, in a "picket fence" alignment using brilliant white-coloured teeth. It is unlikely that patients would want to mirror the appearance of the teeth they'd just had removed!

So the recent resurgence in the desire for white teeth is simply a variation on the attempt by our grandparents and great grandparents to improve on nature. And improving on nature can be fraught and is, by definition, unnatural. Just as we can often pick 'botox-ed' faces, bleached white teeth are not difficult to spot.



- 1 Featured Paper or pearly white?
- 2 News Introducing Stacey
- 2 Education Diabetes education nights

### This month...

*Why have 'pearly' whites gone out of fashion? Read our feature to learn about the modern practise of teeth whitening.*

*We also introduce another member of the friendly Bite Team to you.*

*Lastly, our free Diabetes education program kicks off next month. Diabetes affects so many lives and those diagnosed can feel lost trying to cope. Our information sessions include experts from many areas of health and the information they have will help give back some control to sufferers.*

Dr Simon Franks



> continued

But while most would argue that the prevention of oral disease (including water fluoridation) is of greater significance than a quest for aesthetically pleasing smiles, there's no harm in altering the colour of your teeth—just as long as you seek advice from your dentist or hygienist and take care when using do-it-yourself products.

So how do these products work? And why are some so risky?

Tooth whitening attempts to make teeth appear whiter, usually by bleaching the surface enamel. The results can vary, from bright-white smiles to an almost non-existent change, depending on the original tooth colour, the cause of colour irregularities and the whitening technique used.

There are three methods of tooth bleaching available in Australia, most of which use various concentrations of oxidising agents, such as hydrogen peroxide:

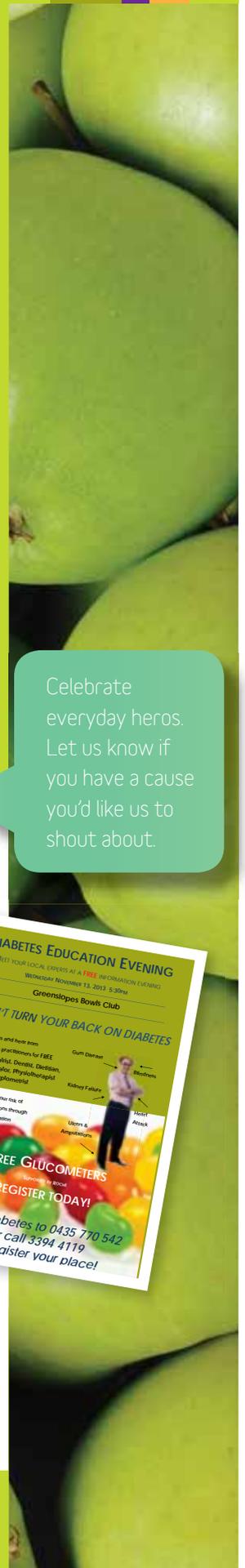
1. Home bleaching/over-the-counter products—where low concentrations of bleach are applied using standard trays (which aren't moulded to the patient's mouth);
2. bleaching in a dental surgery—to supplement to home bleaching with low-to-medium concentrations;

3. Power bleaching in a dental surgery—the application of high concentrations of bleach and the use of light to activate hydrogen peroxide. Rubber dams and protective glasses are used to cover the patient's face and eyes.

Extrinsic stains—those on the outside of the tooth tissue caused by caffeine, tobacco and bacterial pigments – can be removed by an oral health professional without bleaching.

If you seek whiter teeth, your choice of application and procedure will depend on the colour change that's required (lower concentrations deliver more modest results) and how much you want to spend. But generally, you improve your chances of success if you visit a professional.

The most common side effect is tooth sensitivity, and tissue/gum irritation—this is more common when using higher concentrations. Frequent application of tooth whitening chemicals, particularly those of high concentration, can permanently damage enamel tooth surface and soft gum tissues if not used correctly. So it's important you get your teeth and gums checked for disease by a dentist before undergoing any whitening procedures.



Celebrate everyday heros. Let us know if you have a cause you'd like us to shout about.

## News

### Introducing Stacey



Stacey started with the Bite Dental team three months ago when she made the move from windy Wellington, NZ to Brisbane. She has three years experience in dental assisting throughout which time she developed her skills in a variety of clinics, including one of New Zealand's largest prisons.

Stacey enjoys the organization and initiative required in dental assisting and she has already been complemented highly on her exceptional care of her patients. Stacey is also planning on upgrading her skills with further Certificates in Dental Assisting next year.

So if you have not yet met her smiling face—be sure to say "hi" to her at your next visit!

## Education

### Diabetes education nights

Starting next month, Simon and Jenna will be running free education evenings around Brisbane for people diagnosed with diabetes. Diabetes is a condition that is very complex and affects the WHOLE body—even the teeth! Bite Dental, along with colleagues from a number of different allied health areas including podiatry, optometry, nutrition, exercise physiology, diabetes education and more will be donating their time once a quarter to help others understand how this condition affects different aspects of the body and what you can do about it.

If you, or someone you know has diabetes—ask Lyn-Maree for some more information on these evenings. They will be very valuable!

*Do you have Diabetes?*

Come to our **FREE** info session with local experts

Wednesday 13 November • Greenslopes Bowls Club

**REGISTER NOW: text DIABETES to 0435 770 542**

