



Pearly Whites

Beautify your smile with these tips from a top cosmetic dentist

By **Rona Berg**

Though they may not be what you think about when you think about beauty, your teeth deserve the same kind of love that you lavish on your skin and hair. Pretty, pearly whites can really brighten up your look.

But as we age, our teeth can change. The gums may thin (making the teeth look less even), and the teeth can change color and shift, which may alter the shape of the face and make us look older. If you notice a change, speak to your dentist.

In many cases, cosmetic dentistry—from tooth whitening to shaping to realigning—is a great refresher, and it's certainly a lot less invasive than cosmetic surgery, for those who may be considering it. Here, Dr. Alex Rubinov, a top cosmetic dentist in Manhattan, shares tips on keeping teeth healthy and looking their best.

What can you do to prevent teeth from yellowing and staining? Why does that happen? Any foods that exacerbate the problem?

I would always start this conversation by making sure to have a dental professional perform prophylactic care. But since you can't get to the dentist every day, prevention is the key to success. You have to do your job at home by brushing twice daily and flossing at night to keep your teeth clean and healthy.

The color of our teeth is not determined exclusively by superficial stains but more so by the underlying color of our dentin. Teeth have several layers and the outermost layer (enamel) acts as a protective barrier but also a crystalline projector. The dentin layer which is directly behind enamel is a porous sponge that absorbs and determines tooth color. The key is to prevent foods and liquids from penetrating the enamel layer and altering the color of our dentin.

One of my favorite techniques is the wonderful simplicity of drinking water. After drinking coffee, a beet juice or red wine, always swish your mouth afterward with water. This will prevent the staining of enamel and further discoloration of the dentin.

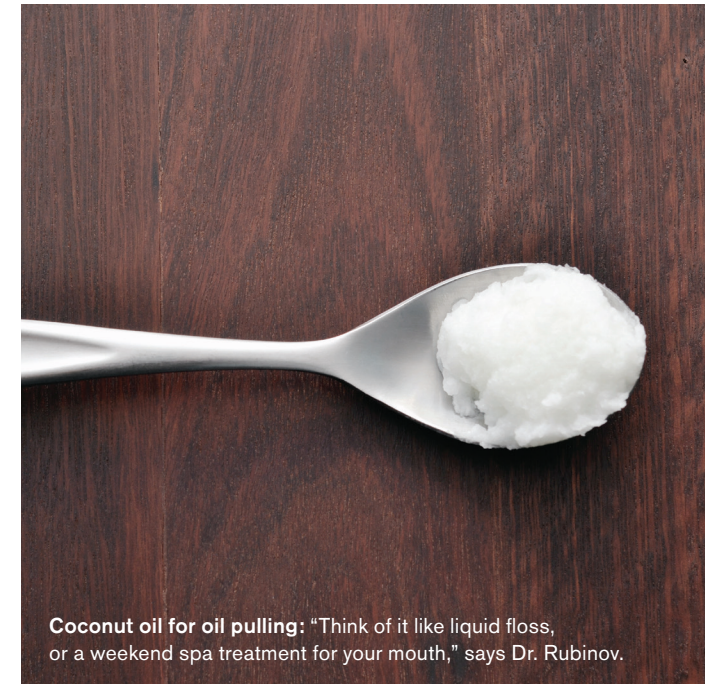
Are there any natural ways to whiten? Are there foods that can help whiten teeth?

Using activated charcoal is a natural way to whiten teeth. There are many brands on the market. My biggest concern about any product that can whiten your teeth is to make sure not to overuse it. You have to be careful that the activated charcoal product is not too abrasive on your teeth such that there is damage to your enamel.

Oil pulling is very trendy right now. Some claim it improves oral health. Do you recommend it? Why or why not?

Oil pulling is a wonderful way to create a more favorable microbiome in your mouth and make sure that there are no harmful bacteria hiding in the crevices of your mouth. Think of it like liquid floss. I would encourage everyone to try it and see if it's for them. However, it's often hard to get people to floss daily and brush twice.

If you want to spend the extra time to oil pull with coconut oil for five to 15 minutes as part of your dental regimen, then more power to you. Try it as a weekend spa treatment for your mouth. If you can fit it into your routine, turn to it frequently.



Coconut oil for oil pulling: "Think of it like liquid floss, or a weekend spa treatment for your mouth," says Dr. Rubinov.

How long does a whitening treatment take?

In-office tooth whitening takes one hour and is not a cookie-cutter solution, as many would like to believe. Every person has a different baseline and in-office treatments should be tailored to meet your individual needs! The two leading in-office bleaching products that have produced excellent results in my Manhattan practice are Zoom and Boost treatments. But only a dental professional can make them perform optimally because of the concentration of bleaching agents in the products. into your routine, turn to it frequently.

After you have had your teeth whitened, how do you extend it? After how much time will you need to go back and have it done again?

Maintaining a healthy smile depends on everyone's unique physiognomy. I am comfortable with my patients having in-office bleaching performed twice a year but not much more. A lot depends on an individual's genetic predisposition and at-home care. I have some patients come for cleaning every three months to minimize plaque and tartar buildup that leads to staining and bacterial colonization.

At-home care is crucial. The gold standard for brushing is to use a soft-bristled toothbrush with a gentle touch. Consistency and repetition surpasses force; brushing twice daily—in the morning and before bed—will lead to the healthiest, brightest smile.