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# The role of the dental hygienist in Tooth Whitening

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## ▣ Introduction

The demand for a healthy and attractive smile is increasing. Young people who are preparing for a new job or planning a wedding, older generations who want to rejuvenate their look, are both looking for the dentist to obtain a white and bright smile. Among other treatment options available for treating discolored teeth, tooth whitening is the most conservative, economic and simple way to lighten teeth.

In order to obtain a satisfactory whitening result in every patient, the role of every staff member in the dental clinic has become specialized. The role of the dental hygienist in tooth whitening is very broad ranging from diagnosis and treatment planning, proper consultation, performance of whitening procedures to final maintenance care.

## ▣ Diagnosis & Treatment planning

Before starting tooth whitening, it is essential to carefully understand the patient's needs, requirements and expectations. Generally patient expectations fall into one of three categories.

- Extreme white teeth: These patients are generally very eager to commence treatment and very cooperative. To achieve a good result, expectations should be managed properly before starting treatment. Care should be taken that the patient does not overuse the bleaching material.

- Color according to patient's expertise: Patients in this category follow instructions very well but need continuous stimulation to proceed treatment to the end.
- Color that looks natural rather than too white: As tooth whitening is going on and the tooth color starts to look brighter and natural, Naturalists tend to desire more extreme white teeth.

A full and comprehensive dental and oral examination including shade taking with a spectrophotometer is essential for proper treatment planning (fig. 1).



Fig 1. Tooth color assessment with a Spectrophotometer

#### Home whitening



Fig 2. Power Whitening procedure performed by dental hygienist

#### Power whitening (fig. 2)

1. Prophylaxis of tooth surface
2. Retraction and Isolation
3. Gingival protection
4. Application of power whitening agent
5. Sealing
6. Light activation
7. Removal of power whitening agent
8. Application of neutral sodium fluoride
9. Removal

#### Conclusion

During tooth whitening, while the dental hygienist takes care of the patient, the dentist is able to treat other patients, which enables an increase in effective time panning and management. A balanced role assignment between patient, hygienist and dentist must be realized in order to achieve a satisfactory result. The general whitening treatment carried out by the hygienist should not end just by the patient's satisfaction about the whitening result. From the start of

the treatment until the end, they have to give 100% confidence to the patients(Fig. 3&4). At the same time, based on the wide experience of the dentist and the patient's request perfection has to be reached.

For this reason, the influence of consulting and the role of the dental hygienist during whitening treatment is of utmost importance.



|| Fig 3. Problems encountered during tooth whitening can be easily solved by the dental hygienist



|| Fig 4. Happy patient after treatment