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PROTOCOL FOR TAKE-HOME TOOTH WHITENING IN MY OFFICE

TRAYS: We make our take-home bleaching trays from excellent impressions made with alginate substitute materials (polyvinyls or A-silicones) because they have better properties in my opinion including greater accuracy and the fact that they can be repaired. We use .050 soft tray material. Reservoirs in whitening trays are not supposed to be necessary, but we use them anyway. We also extend our trays about 4 mm. on to the gingiva instead of scalloping the edges. This technique seals our trays which prevents the whitener from oozing out on to the gingiva. By keeping the whitening material in the reservoirs and in contact with the teeth, there is greater efficiency and therefore faster results.

PRE-WHITENING: We suggest a complete prophylaxis before beginning the whitening process. We often begin with night time whitening. If there is any sensitivity, we switch to short duration day time whitening with the use of a pre-whitener, Power Swabs, (formerly Pre-White and GRINrx Whitening Stain Remover Swabs) for 30 seconds prior to every application of the whitener. The pre-whitener contains aqueous chemical cleaners (solvents and detergents) that dissolve some of the debris on the enamel and, therefore, the enamel is significantly cleaned. Obviously, clean teeth will whiten easier than dirty teeth. Power Swabs also contains a surfactant (wetting agent) that dissipates the whitening gel immediately, and most important, helps keep the teeth hydrated so sensitivity is reduced to zero or near zero if used according to the timetable below.

WHITENING: We use hydrogen peroxide (or short duration carbamide peroxide) whiteners. The Power Swab is applied first. It cleans and wets the teeth, and then the whitener, already loaded in its tray, is immediately inserted. The whitener gel dissipates due to the surfactant in the Power Swabs, spreads out and permeates more evenly over the teeth, and now keeps the teeth moist instead of dehydrating them. In the rare instance when gingival irritation occurs, the tray can be cut back to a scalloped edge to avoid having the whitener contact the soft tissue.

ONE ARCH OR TWO?: We do something else differently in our office. We whiten one arch at a time, almost always the maxillary arch first. This method takes longer, but it gives the patient a control arch to see and appreciate how much they are whitening. As a result, they are very compliant with our instructions. They are also terrific marketers for whitening by our office since the dramatic difference they achieve between arches shows the effectiveness of what we are doing and is often shown off by the patient. And these patients are continually looking at their mouths, watching the changes, making observations, and therefore becoming more aware of the need for other cosmetic dentistry.

TIMETABLE: The first day, we suggest 30 seconds of Power Swabs and 15 minutes of whitener. Assuming there is no sensitivity after the first day (normal), on the second day we increase to 30 seconds of Power Swabs and a half hour of whitener. If there is still no sensitivity, continue with single 30-minute daily applications or increase to twice a day for faster results. If sensitivity occurs at any stage, skip a day and revert back to the next lower time. Thirty-minute applications can be reduced to 15 minutes, and 15-minute applications can be reduced to 10 minutes. (In very rare cases you might need to reduce to 5 minutes for a few days). Always use Power Swabs for 30 seconds prior to applying the whitener. The idea is to get the teeth lighter while keeping the patient happy, well cared for, and sensitivity free. Superb results can be achieved in 2 to 3 weeks per arch.

RESULTS: Spectacular. No sensitivity. Patient feels in control. Teeth get whiter without pain. Patients talk about what is happening and market your practice. More cosmetic dentistry is scheduled since more attention to the mouth is generated. Everybody wins !!!