

The shining

You don't have to spend hundreds of dollars to whiten your teeth. Some surprising solutions can be found right in your kitchen.

By **Rachel LeWinter**

Put down that Cherry Coke Zero. Your morning latte, midday soda and nightly red wine habits are tarnishing your teeth. "The rule of thumb is anything that can stain a white T-shirt can stain your teeth too," says Elisa Mello, DDS, from NYC Smile Design, a cosmetic and restorative dental practice. The average cost for a professional whitening treatment is \$750, and Dr. Mello notes that many of the procedures can cause some discomfort or pain. But you don't have to suffer or shell out a ton of cash to clean up your chompers. Fortunately, Mother Nature has some natural (and cheap) solutions to prevent yellowing and help keep teeth bright.

Strawberries

An exception to the anything-that-can-stain-a-white-T-shirt rule, these contain a compound called malic acid, which can help loosen lingering stains. To make an all-natural lightening treatment, mash a few strawberries into a bowl, then, using your finger, spread the pulp all over your teeth. Leave it on a minute or two, then thoroughly rinse and brush it off. Just remember not to use this treatment for too long or too often; once a week is

sufficient. "Strawberries contain natural sugars and can cause cavities," Dr. Mello explains

Hydrogen peroxide

It's most commonly known for its use in treating cuts and scrapes, but it can also be used to disinfect your mouth, freshen your breath and whiten your teeth. "Just rinse and gargle (but never swallow) about a capful once a week to help lift surface stains," Dr. Mello instructs. "If you're not comfortable swishing it in your mouth, dip a Q-tip into the peroxide and rub it over your teeth. Be sure to immediately rinse with water afterward," she adds.

DIY paste

The materials used to make a do-it-yourself whitening paste can all be bought at your local grocery store or pharmacy. Dr. Mello suggests adding a few drops of water to a teaspoon of baking soda until it forms a thick paste. Then add a pinch of salt, two to four drops of hydrogen peroxide and a pea-size amount of toothpaste. Your homemade concoction is safe to use up to three times a week; or alternate it with your regular toothpaste. "Just remember to brush thoroughly, and don't forget to floss!" the dentist adds.



Dr. Mello's healthy teeth do's and don'ts

Do

- ✓ Sink your teeth into apples, carrots, pears, guavas, cauliflower and cucumbers; they increase salivary production which flushes away stains over time.
- ✓ Load up on vegetables like broccoli, lettuce and spinach—they create a barrier-like film on teeth that can actually help scrub away stubborn stains over time and prevent them from recurring.

Don't

- ✗ Overindulge in dark liquids like soy sauce, red wine, fruit juices, coffee, tea and cola.
- ✗ Be fooled by "healthy" beverages: Sports drinks, energy drinks and fitness waters contain organic acids that are known to break down calcium, so they're especially good at eroding your teeth.
- ✗ Load up on acidic foods that contain vinegar like pickles, ketchup, green olives and most relishes—they can open up the pores of the tooth enamel, allowing for easy staining.

The 400-calorie lunch

Pizza



→ **ASK FOR** One slice of thin-crust veggie pizza and one side garden salad (just 50 calories if its all veggies) with 2 tablespoons of Italian dressing (100 calories).

*Make sure you ask for the thin crust; one piece of regular-crust pizza in NY is more than 400 calories, but most thin-crust slices are just 250 calories (average for common brands like Pizza Hut, Domino's, etc.)

Thai



→ **ASK FOR** Any two of the following appetizers: Chicken satay and 1 tablespoon peanut sauce (262 calories), two summer rolls (140-155 calories), torn yum soup (150-160 calories), or larb gai minced chicken salad or spicy beef salad (both under 300 calories per serving).

From nutritionists Lauren Slayton and Caren Tishfield—the duo behind the diet-friendly takeout guide Mindful Menus and eating-education company Foodtrainers (foodtrainers.net).

On a diet and have a favorite spot for lunch? E-mail it to us and we'll tell you what you can and cannot eat at mindandbody@timeoutny.com

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