

FACT SHEET:

Gum Whitening (blanching)

Gum Whitening (blanching) is a very rare occurrence that is caused by Hydrogen Peroxide based whitening gel getting onto the gums of either a atypical susceptible client, or the gel strength being above the legal limit of 12%HP. Generally blanching occurs more frequently above 14%HP

Because this is so rare, if this happens more than once we would suggest you notify your gel supplier of any events and seek written assurance that the gel supplied is 12%HP or less

Remember, increasing gel strength does not make teeth whiter but rather the efficacy of the system used. For example a catalyst activated 6%HP gel can produce comparable results to 35% HP when activated by a light producing 200,000 lumens (lux) or more

The Cause:

Blanching is due to the decomposition of any gel that is inadvertently deposited upon the gingiva (gum) and activated by both the warmth of the gums and the light

Decomposition is when the Hydrogen Peroxide H_2O_2 separates into water H_2O , and Oxygen O as it bleaches; the oxygen is released into millions of microscopic bubbles that link together and adhere by surface tension to the delicate surface (mucosal) of the gums (gingiva).

These linked microscopic oxygen bubbles give the appearance of whitened gums. This affect is transitory; usually over about 20-30 minutes following treatment the gingiva returns to pink, however, if the blanching was severe, there can be an uncomfortable stinging on the gumline

When there is a stinging sensation, the gums are tender and can be easily irritated when brushing the following day

This tenderness is because the gingiva surface has a very delicate film called mucosal tissue which can be torn by the oxygen bubbles adhering to this tissue by just the natural surface tension of the oxygen bubble.

Also, it is thought that the mucosal tissue can be microscopically torn as the oxygen bubbles burst

Relief from the stinging sensation

1/ Apply BONJELA, or similar. Rub onto affected gumline

If pain persists...

2/ Take Ibuprofen (Nurofen, Maxigesic) for pain relief

How to Manage:

Firstly, take care to keep gel away from the gums and lips

Secondly, apply a thin barrier of lip balm or Vaseline to the inside of both upper and lower lips and a little onto the lower gumline. It is best to do this once the cheek retractor is in place using a cotton bud to wipe on a thin layer of lip balm

Also, 2 things to help keep gel off the gums:

1/ When applying the gel:

Because the pores in the enamel tend to spread the migrating gel laterally within the enamel (see *picture*) you do not have to take the gel right onto the gumline, you can stop about half a millimetre away from the gum

2/ When wiping gel off the teeth, be sure to wipe away from the gums

