

# looking good

by alyssa schottland

photography by clinton hussey

**W**e have a cultural obsession with gleaming white teeth, a symbol of youth, confidence and beauty. Up there with the season's must-have round-toe Prada platform, and with the staying power of the infamously wait-listed Birkin bag, a white smile is the ultimate style accessory. And luckily for us, a brighter smile is way more attainable than the aforementioned bag. In fact, most people with white teeth—blindingly white teeth—have enlisted help from the array of teeth whitening systems available. The days of brushing with hydrogen peroxide and baking soda are thankfully gone.

But first why do teeth yellow? “Lifestyle factors, like things we do, eat and drink—tea, coffee, red wine, berries and cigarettes—change the colour of our teeth because the outermost layer (enamel) is porous,” explains Vancouver-based Dr. Milton H. Reskovich. “And the yellowing of the innermost part of our teeth (dentin) is a result from the natural aging progression. And unfortunately to the best of my knowledge, that process can't be slowed down,” concludes Dr. Reskovich who uses BriteSmile and Zoom2 in his office.

There are two types of whitening—those that involve laser lights and those that don't.

**OPTION No.1** In-office procedures like BriteSmile, Zoom and generic lasers all work in a similar way. First teeth are isolated and gums are covered with layers of gauze or latex so the bleaching agent (usually peroxide) does not irritate soft oral tissues. The bleach is applied on teeth and then a light or laser source is directed at the mouth for about an hour with periodic breaks. **THE PROS:** Teeth are usually a remarkable 4-8 shades lighter; results are instant; there doesn't have to be much home care. (Although BriteSmile recommends maintenance kits.) **THE CONS:** Costs can be steep, ranging between \$400-1000;





teeth can be sensitive or downright ache; the procedure sometimes can cause headaches lasting 1-3 days.

**OPTION No.2** Home bleaching trays, strips, paint-ons and whitening toothpastes work using various techniques without lasers and produce an array of results.

Bleaching trays require a trip to the dentist where molds of the mouth are fitted for custom trays. A concentration of peroxide is applied with every wear and trays are worn overnight for 1-2 weeks. (Methods may vary). **THE PROS:** Teeth can appear 2-5 shades lighter; it is relatively inexpensive, ranging from \$200-400. **THE CONS:** Results take time to notice; the process can be messy, uncomfortable, and may cause sensitivity.

Paint-ons like GoSmile are a favourite among Hollywood elite. The formula is pumped onto a brush tip and painted right on to the tooth's surface. **THE PROS:** Results are a drastic 3-8 shades lighter after ten days; the small sleek vials make it super easy to use anywhere; no stinging or sensitivity; it is inexpensive, about \$100. **THE CONS:** The only found con is that you can't eat or drink for 20 minutes. (No wonder Hollywood digs it.)

If you aren't looking for immediate or extreme results, but definitely could use a freshening up, whitening toothpastes work well. The ones we like —Umbrian Clay by Fresh, Acca Kappa, SuperSmile, and Denblan—contain whitening agents like calprox, low doses of peroxide, lemon, essential oils and eucalyptus that polish away stains revealing a brighter smile. **THE PROS:** Inexpensive, ranging from \$20-65, easy to use and if used daily produce decent results. **THE CONS:** None, you're brushing your teeth anyway.

So don't go banning the coffee, tea and red wine completely. Your Prada platforms and blazing white Chanel pant suit will be complimented by pristine teeth, looking their best. Now that is something to smile about. ♥