

A warning about whitening woes

The newest trend in dental whitening is the development of mall-based “professional whitening” kiosks. It is my understanding that the attendants at these kiosks are usually not licensed dental professionals. Only licensed dentists with degrees from accredited learning institutions can legally apply whitening gels to teeth. Licensed registered dental hygienists, may only perform whitening under the direction of a licensed dentist. In the state of Ohio, dental assistants, even those with a license to take x-rays, may not under any circumstance apply whitening gels to teeth. No dental personnel, except a licensed dentist, can legally assess the appropriateness of whitening for any person because an assessment of this nature constitutes a diagnosis.

The individuals operating these kiosks are manipulating a loophole in the law because the customers apply “the special whitening agent” to themselves. When I interviewed a local “bleachologist” recently



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at one of the kiosks I was told that the whitening gel was “no different than people can get over the counter.” However, he would not provide me with the name of the product. When I asked how the customers were informed of potential problems with dental whitening I was told, “We make sure they don’t have periodontal disease, fillings, or any of that stuff.”

There are some obvious concerns here.... How can these unlicensed dental professionals determine candidacy for whitening without making a diagnosis? The kiosks are set up as a form of a dental clinic with masks, gloves, dental chairs, etc., which give the illusion that dental examinations are being performed. What is the mysterious bleach-

ing solution, and where can it be purchased over-the-counter? If in fact, that is the case, then the brand of the product should be disclosed openly. More importantly, what measures are in place to manage complications?

Until these questions are clearly answered, it would be wise for those desiring to whiten their teeth to have a discussion with a licensed dentist. There are many whitening products available, and not all of them are costly. However, even the use of over-the-counter products should be monitored by a qualified dental professional!

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For questions about dental health or to schedule a complementary consultation, call 330-364-2011, visit www.doctorhuff.net, or ask your regular dentist.

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