

What Causes Tooth Staining

Many factors cause and aggravate tooth staining, including age, translucency and thinness, eating habits, smoking habits, , grinding, and trauma.

A direct correlation exists between tooth color and age. Usually, the older the teeth the more the teeth are stained due to accumulation and general wear and tear. Teenagers will likely experience immediate, drastic results from whitening because their teeth have not accumulated a large build up of stains. In the twenties when the teeth begin to show a yellow cast, teeth-whitening may require slightly more effort. Teeth in their forties begin to change hues from yellow to brown, indicating more maintenance in teeth-whitening efforts. By the fifties, the teeth have absorbed a host of stubborn stains which can prove difficult, but not impossible, to remove.

The starting color of teeth varies from person to person and ranges from yellow-brownish to greenish-grey and becomes more pronounced as we age. Yellow-brown is generally more responsive to bleaching efforts than green-gray.

The genetic traits of translucency and thinness become more apparent over time. While all teeth show some translucency, those that are opaque and thick have an advantage: they appear lighter in color, show more sparkle and are more responsive to bleaching. However, teeth that are thinner and more transparent (most apparent in the front teeth) may not be able to be bleached as the teeth lack the necessary pigment. According to cosmetic dentists, transparency is the only condition that cannot be corrected by any form of teeth whitening.

Eating habits are a contributing factor in tooth staining. The habitual consumption of red wine, coffee, tea, cola, carrots, oranges and other deeply-colour beverages and foods causes considerable staining over the years. Enamel erosion is caused, in part, by consuming citrus fruits, vinegar and other acidic items. When combined, these two factors cause the surface of the tooth to become more transparent and more of the yellow colour dentin shows through.

Smoking habits can alter the color of teeth. Smoking has been proven to leave brownish deposits which slowly soak into the tooth structure and cause intrinsic discoloration.

Grinding your teeth can affect tooth color. Most frequently caused by stress, teeth grinding can add to micro-cracking in the teeth and can cause the biting edges to darken.