

The dangers of DIY teeth-whitening

By **Sophie Borland**

YOUNG women are putting their health at risk by using DIY teeth-whitening treatments involving baking soda, ash and hydrogen peroxide, dentists warn.

A growing number of websites are promoting at-home techniques which can cause permanent damage to tooth enamel and gums.

The DIY treatments are being posted on the internet by ordinary members of the public - often teenagers.

Some wrongly advise brushing teeth with soap, salt, baking soda and even the bleach hydrogen peroxide as a cheaper alternative to having them professionally whitened. Dentists warn that some of the DIY treatments can dissolve the enamel of the teeth so they actually look darker in colour.

The popularity of teeth-whitening has increased tenfold in the past five years and at least 100,000 people have some form of treatment every year.

Laser teeth-whitening costs as much as £1,300 and although professional bleaching is much cheaper, patients can still expect to pay between £500 and £700.

There are also cheaper whitening gels and 'deep clean' tooth-brushes available from pharmacists for up to £100, although these are not deemed to be effective.

Professor Andrew Eder, clinical director of the [London Tooth Wear Centre](#), said: 'There seems to be a growing concern among teens about their teeth, and the internet offers many whitening recipes.

'Some of these have the potential to damage healthy teeth.

'Household baking soda is an abrasive, so that with repeated use the white enamel may be worn away and leave teeth browner and with increased sensitivity. Salt crystals will scratch the enamel. Any treatment involving acid is particularly harmful.' Dr Stuart

Johnston of the British Dental Association said: 'The hard tissue of the teeth requires strong chemicals to whiten it that are only safe for use by properly trained clinicians.

'Trying to use recipes for whitening from the internet really isn't a good idea and could lead to individuals damaging their teeth and causing themselves pain.

'It could also cost them money, because having problems repaired by a dentist after attempts at self-whitening could cost many times what would have been paid for a proper, professional treatment by a dentist in the first place.'

