

allure

THE BEAUTY EXPERT

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FALL MAKEUP

92 Soft, Fresh Colors

Shortcut to A Better Body

THE SEXIEST

Bright Ideas

Even the best whitening treatments are only as good as the person using them.

Preventing mishaps is a matter of keeping a few simple tips in mind.

- **Start clean.** Whitening formulas take unevenly to dirty teeth. "Tartar creates a barrier that bleaching gel can't penetrate," says New York City dentist Clifford Williams. "If you don't have a professional cleaning first, you'll end up with yellow halos anywhere you have buildup."

- **Be realistic.** We all have a limit to

how white our teeth can be. "I call it an inherent lightness potential," Bruce Matis says. Those whose discoloration skews toward gray are particularly limited. These stains are often caused by antibiotics taken during childhood.

- **Know when to stop.** Using kits for longer than the prescribed time won't yield pearlier whites—and may, in fact, damage those pearls. Oversaturating the teeth with peroxide—with several consecutive rounds with a tray kit, for example—can break down the dentin, says Jonathan Levine, creator of GoSMILE paint-on whitener, who can detect an overzealous bleacher by the Ajax blue, translucent tinge to her smile. The

consequences don't end there, says New York City dentist Irwin Smigel, who pioneered the first in-office laser whitening treatments. "I've seen damage to gum tissues. People need root-canal therapy when this is done obsessively."

- **Don't drink and bleach.** While experts say that most postwhitening patients suddenly become as meticulous as new-car owners about keeping up their pristine smiles, some go right back to their old habits—red wine, tea, coffee, soy sauce, tobacco, and so on—and teeth color. "Whitening results last between six months and two years, depending on the person's enamel," says New York City dentist Marc Lowenberg.

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(No Dentist Required)

Gwyneth Paltrow

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