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health

MARCH 2005

BURN CALORIES WITH YOUR MIND

and get the body you

Eat this!

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Teeth whiteners are in everything these days, even gum. Can all this bleach hurt your teeth?



IT IS POSSIBLE to trash your teeth in the quest for a brighter smile. But you'll have nothing to worry about

if you take the moderate route and know how to use your products right. "Gum, toothpaste, and floss really just buff, polish, and remove plaque. The amount of bleach in them is not enough to cause harm," says Clifford Williams, DMD, a New York-based cosmetic dentist.

Using whitening strips or at-home trays consistently could lead to trouble, though. Both contain up to 10 percent of the bleaching agents carbamide and hydrogen peroxide. When used long-term, these treatments may produce tiny openings on the enamel, making your teeth more likely to become cold-sensitive and more susceptible to erosion and nerve damage.

For the safest at-home whitening, Williams recommends using bleaching kits, strips, and trays no more than once every 3 months and for no longer than 20 days in a row. If you insist on more frequent use, look for brands with a lower concentration of active ingredients, such as GoSmile Daily Compact (\$28) and Oral-B Brushups (\$2.99 for a 12-pack), which contain just 1 percent hydrogen peroxide and can be used daily. —*Karina Timmel*

HEALTH.COM BONUS: Click on "Beauty" for the lowdown on professional whitening methods.

Protect the men in your life from cancer. Activist/actress Elisabeth Rohm tells how. [page 62]

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