



# Ask the Dentist

*Got a question for a dentist?*

If you have a question you would like answered by a Ministry of Health-approved dentist, send it to us at [enquiries.anjar@gmail.com](mailto:enquiries.anjar@gmail.com). This issue, your questions are answered by orthodontist, implantologist, oral surgeon, aesthetics and laser dentist at Imperial Dental Specialist Centre, **Dato' Dr. How Kim Chuan** and aesthetic laser dentist, **Dr. Arlena Lee**.



## MANY SHADES OF GREY

**My teeth have become grey and dull over the years, probably due to too much coffee and too many cigarettes. What are the best treatments under RM1000 for making them brighter and whiter? Are there any affordable home treatments that I can do myself?**

There are many factors contributing to dull and grey teeth. Medically, the staining of teeth is divided into two types. Intrinsic stains and extrinsic stains: intrinsic stains are stains that are present inside the teeth. These stains are due to intake of medication, excessive fluoride intake or even trauma to the teeth. These stains cannot be removed by whitening treatments and would require more invasive procedures such as veneers or crowns to mask the discoloration.

Extrinsic stains are stains accumulated over life and attributed to diet and habits such as smoking. These stains can be removed by scaling and polishing, followed by whitening treatment. Based on your budget, whitening treatment is definitely the treatment of choice. There are two types of whitening treatments available, mainly the in-office whitening treatment using hydrogen peroxide, or the home kit with carbamide peroxide. The main difference between the two would be the type of peroxide used, as well as the concentration of peroxide. The in-office whitening kit will provide instant results after one or two cycles at the dentist. The latter usually takes a longer period of time - ten to fourteen days - in order to achieve similar results. Using this method, the patient is required to use a mould containing the peroxide gel for 20-30 minutes per day. The price for whitening treatment is around the range of RM1000 depending on the practice. However, both are not available as OTC products and would require a prescription from the dentist. It is strongly advised to visit a dental practitioner in order to establish the correct underlying cause and the appropriate treatment.

## BROKEN AND BOTHERED

**I have been blessed with lovely, straight white teeth all my life, but recently had an accident and lost four perfectly good teeth – right in the front where they are very conspicuous. Can you please tell me the options I have for restoring them? Two are lost completely, while the other two are chipped.**

Replacing missing teeth has always been a topic of interest among dental professionals. To address the first concern of restoring the chipped tooth: treatment modality depends on the size of the chipped tooth. It ranges from a simple filing to fill up a small chipped cavity to having composite veneers, or ceramic veneers and ceramic crowns all ranging from RM100 to RM2000 each and it depends on the aesthetic demand of the patient as well as budget. Restoring missing teeth is complex, and there are various options, depending on whether the patient wants removable or fixed prosthesis. The cheapest option would be the removable partial dentures. The advantage of dentures is that they are easy to clean, as the patient is able to remove them at home. Fixed prosthesis such as bridges or implants is another option. Bridges would be slightly cheaper than implants. However, it involves shaving down two to four adjacent teeth in order to provide support for the two missing teeth. Implants are conservative as they do not involve shaving down adjacent teeth, as the implant screws emerge from the bone. With that being said, placement of implants would require adequate bone to be present. It is still wise to seek professional dental opinion as treatment varies on a case to case basis.

