

Great White BITE

Teeth-whitening isn't just for the vain. Years of indulging our palates with the finer things in life – and some guilty pleasures – can make it essential. **SHAMUS SILLAR** gets a polish.

The last time I had my teeth checked in Australia, I was quizzed in surprising detail about the four years I'd just spent in Shanghai. Peering at my incisors, the dentist asked a series of pointed questions about my activities in that city. Finally he got to the heart of the matter:

"And did you drink a lot of green tea?"

"Quite a lot, yes."

"Daily?"

"Yes, daily."

"I see," he said, in the manner of a detective unearthing a vital clue.

My teeth, it turns out, were mildly discoloured thanks to all those cups of Longjing – not to mention four years of dark stir-fry sauces. Oh, and cigarettes. And red wine.

The Solution

Singapore is home to some of the most advanced dental and medical care, not to mention the spin-off cosmetic services. Having recently arrived, this seemed like a perfect place to vanquish any stains.

I paid a visit to Orchard Scotts Dental, a state-of-the-art clinic in Wheelock Place that for two years has been alleviating patients of every kind of dental ailment – from crooked, cracked and crowded teeth to headaches or shoulder pain caused by

jaw problems. The Smiles Gallery on the clinic's website gives a good indication of the variety of work they perform.

Dr Ronnie Yap, who lectures internationally and comes highly trained, administered the BriteSmile treatment to see if we could erase "the curse of the cuppa".

First, though, I sat through a consultation to ensure I was an appropriate candidate for BriteSmile. Each patient at Orchard Scotts Dental is advised and then treated according to his or her dental history and condition. As Dr Yap pointed out, if a heavy smoker wants to get his teeth whitened, then he can't expect the results to last if he keeps up with his habit.

The Experience

The one-hour treatment is mildly bizarre but never uncomfortable. It helps that the treatment room resembles something from an expensive spa: beaded curtain entrance, pots of ornate flowers, and a scattering of therapeutic pebbles. I've not been to many dental clinics where I would happily *live*.



After a quick polish, you lie back in the super-comfortable couch while various gels and compounds are applied. One is the teeth-whitening gel itself; others protect the gums and lips. The area is covered and the process begins.

BriteSmile works by means of a special light that sweeps very slowly across your teeth and activates the whitening gel. A blue glow from beneath the covering material and the mildest of tingling sensations are the only signs that something's happening.

The hour passes quickly, not only because it's divided into three 20-minute applications, but because a pair of headphones is slipped over your ears, channelling soft-rock ballads from the 80s and 90s. Admittedly, this might make the hour seem longer for some, but it's nice to have the distraction.

Before I knew it, we were done. A bit of tinkering and a couple of rinses later, and my new look was unveiled in a mirror (and in a couple of "before" and "after" photos).


It's funny how well you know your own teeth: I could immediately see a difference, without the aid of the photos. And, pleasingly, it was a subtle rather than a dramatic change – my fear of resembling one of the Osmonds hadn't come to pass. Dr Yap confirmed the results by using a colour-measuring device to show exactly how many shades of whiteness my teeth had changed.

The Aftermath

Ninety no-fuss minutes after arriving at the clinic, I was back on Orchard Road. The only post-visit requirement was to avoid dark-coloured drinks and food for the following 24 hours ("anything that might stain a white shirt"). Tomato sauce, Coke, mustard and coffee were therefore off the list. Since I was, at the time, living a bachelor's existence while my wife was in Australia, this was pretty much my entire diet. But it was a minor inconvenience.

A small percentage of patients are said to suffer mild sensitivity in their teeth for the following few days. I had no problems – only a genuine sense of satisfaction that my green-tea binge in China was now just a memory rather than a permanent mark in my mouth. **1**

Orchard Scotts Dental is at Wheelock Place, 501 Orchard Road. For more details about BriteSmile, including information about combining the in-office treatment with an at-home system for a more pronounced whiteness, call 6732 9939 or visit www.orchardscottsdental.com.




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