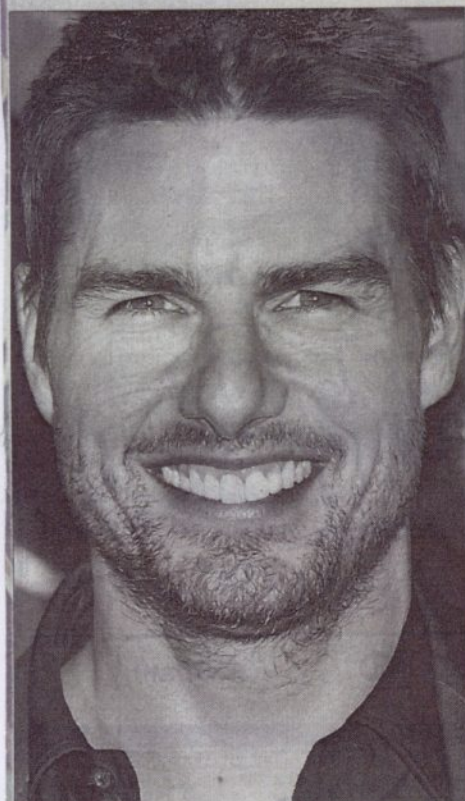


The Daily Telegraph

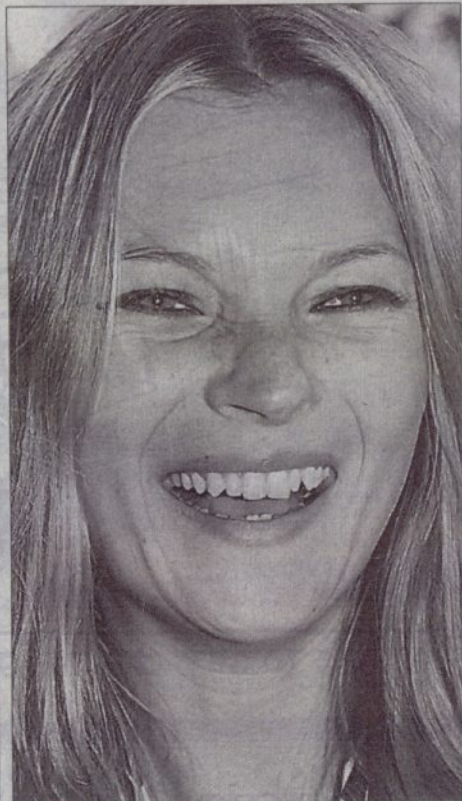
Smile? No problem, says **Thea Jourdan**, who examines the latest techniques in dental cleaning

Teeth so bright, they dazzle

REX/DAVID LONG



Tom Cruise: brilliant performance



Kate Moss: a bright gleam when she opens her mouth



Tim Kash: *Top of the Pops* – and top teeth

Brilliant white teeth are glowing all over the place. Tim Kash, 22, the new face of *Top of the Pops*, is the latest celebrity to dazzle us with his 100-watt grin. *TOTP* has gained two million viewers since Kash started presenting the show in November. Stars such as Kate Moss, Sadie Frost and Tom Cruise all gleam with unnatural brilliance when they open their mouths. Even Gordon Brown has reportedly undergone tooth whitening, now that he actually smiles these days.

Teeth colour is determined by your genes. Ethnic background makes no difference, though darker skin makes teeth look brighter. There are 28 naturally occurring shades of teeth, ranging from butter yellow to grey. Most people are born with ivory-coloured teeth – in dentist's jargon, around an "A2". This shade is seven steps away from the apex of whiteness, a B1. Even B1 has shades of yellow, however, because natural teeth are never pure white. Only Americans tend to aspire to the artificial range of 040, 030, 020 and purest white, 010.

Teeth tend to get yellowed with age, and staining can cause the surface to discolour. Tea, coffee and red wine all stain the teeth. Smoking gradually turns them brown.

Tooth whitening means that it is possible to permanently lighten the colour of the teeth, whatever your age. The end result can be up to six

shades lighter than your original colour. The most common method uses a solution of hydrogen peroxide to bleach the dentine, which is the pulpy layer beneath the enamel.

"Enamel is translucent, so the colour of teeth is determined by the dentine underneath," explains Jo Tanner, of the British Dental Association. "Enamel is porous, so the bleach can penetrate right through."

According to the BDA, all the bleaching methods are safe, as long as they are carried out under the supervision of a dentist. "Never buy bleaching products over the counter," says Tanner. "If you have gum disease, you will be in agony because hydrogen peroxide is an irritant." People with crowns should not use bleaching products because the chemicals can react with the metal attachments.

Dr Mervyn Druian of the London Tooth Whitening Centre has noticed that his clients are asking for whiter smiles. "It used to be the case that patients would aspire to B1," he says. "Now, they want to go whiter than white." He puts it down to a creeping American influence. "We see the stars in movies and we want to be like them," he says. "A bright, white smile makes you feel great, even if it does look enhanced."

The London Tooth Whitening Centre:
020 7722 1235;
www.whiterteeth.co.uk

How to keep your teeth clean, white and healthy

Whitening toothpastes and cleaners
These products, which cost from £2 to £20, claim to be able to whiten teeth by removing stains from the surface of the teeth. They do not, however, change the underlying colour of the dentine. Pearl Drops is a popular abrasive cleaner, but it is not recommended by the BDA because, over time, it can damage the surface of the enamel. Retardex is an effective toothpaste which contains a small amount of chlorine dioxide, which bleaches the tooth surface. Other products use enzymes to break down stains or antibacterial agents. Macleans whitening toothpaste regularly comes out top in consumer tests. These products should not be used by children because their growing teeth are more susceptible to damage.

Scale and polish
Dr Mervyn Druian recommends visiting a dental hygienist once every three months. "An oral hygienist can polish your teeth and remove the surface stains and keep your gums healthy. If your gums are red and inflamed, it makes your teeth look less lustrous." A scale and polish will not make them whiter, but it should make the teeth look cleaner and brighter. Each visit costs from £18 to £30.

DIY teeth-bleaching kits
Over the counter kits cost between £25 and £50. They usually comprise

a gel made from a weak solution of a bleaching agent such as hydrogen peroxide, and trays which fit over your teeth. EU restrictions mean that DIY kits can only contain 0.1 per cent of the bleaching agent, which is unlikely to have much effect on your teeth colour.

"The trays are not properly fitted and there is a chance that the gel will not be snug against the teeth," says leading cosmetic dentist Dr Philip Stemmer.

"The gel can leak into your mouth and may irritate your throat if you accidentally swallow some." The BDA does not recommend DIY kits and advises that dentists should always monitor teeth bleaching.

Expert home bleaching
The dentist makes a mould of your teeth and creates trays, which are worn for an hour every day for a fortnight. Kits cost between £200 and £400 and are suitable for adults who do not wear crowns or synthetic veneers.

Whitening with intense light
This takes about an hour. The dentist applies a strong bleaching gel to the teeth, containing about 35 per cent hydrogen peroxide or chlorine dioxide. A powerful light is then shone at the teeth. The light energy causes a chemical reaction and dark-coloured molecules in the dentine are oxidised to smaller colourless molecules. Power whitening is done with a halogen lamp or a laser.

Whitening with light costs from £450 to £775.

Ultrasonic whitening

This is a very new method of bleaching which is still undergoing trials in Britain. Gel containing a bleaching agent is put in a special tray, which is fitted over the teeth. The tray also contains a copper element which gives out ultrasonic vibrations. These vibrations speed up the oxidising process of the bleach.

Veneers

The brightest white teeth are achievable with veneers. Dr Philip Stemmer says that 99 per cent of his European patients still opt for the lightest available natural colour, B1. The dentist first removes some of the enamel from the natural teeth and then sticks on a porcelain shell. The porcelain veneers can also be used to disguise irregularities and gaps in the teeth. If cared for, the veneers should last for up to 10 years and they will not need to be re-bleached because they are not porous. They are expensive, however, costing from £675 to £875 per tooth.

Tooth whitening chewing gum

This will not whiten your teeth, but it will help to remove the build-up of plaque, which causes gum disease. Chewing gum promotes the production of saliva in your mouth, which has a mild antibacterial effect.