

## Appalled but not surprised: the reality of illegal tooth whitening



The British Dental Association say they are 'appalled but not surprised' by the results of the BBC investigation that has found that teeth-whitening procedures are still taking place in beauty salons and performed by untrained people.

The investigation found that 'training' is being offered via social media, and illegal strength products with a 50% concentration of hydrogen peroxide are being sold in car parks and down dark alleys. These fraudsters are selling dangerous products to the unsuspecting public, at more than eight times the concentrations dentists are legally - and safely - allowed to use.

BDA Chair Eddie Crouch said: 'In the UK, only qualified oral healthcare professionals are allowed to carry out teeth whitening. In the wrong hands, teeth whitening can be extremely dangerous. It isn't just the excruciating pain, or the burnt lips and gums, but also the fact that it can lead to nerve damage and even tooth loss.'

'The BBC's investigation has found that these illegal teeth whitening providers are undeterred by the prospect of a criminal record or a fine which, since 2016, can be an unlimited amount.'

Also responding to the investigation, Dr Linda Greenwall, Chair of the British Dental Bleaching Society (BDBS) added: 'We welcome the BBC's recent review of tooth

whitening, which highlights the importance of dentist-led, safe, and professionally supervised bleaching treatments.

'The programme rightly emphasised that only qualified dentists are legally permitted to carry out teeth whitening. Unregulated beauty salons and individuals offering illegal bleaching treatments continue to pose serious risks to public health, including chemical burns, severe sensitivity, and irreversible tooth damage.'

'Under the Cosmetic Products Enforcement Regulations 2013 and the General Dental Council (GDC) 2016 Position Statement, hydrogen peroxide in tooth whitening products is legally limited to 6% and must be prescribed and administered by a dental professional. These safeguards protect patients from unsafe concentrations and poor infection control practices.'

'The BDBS is calling for continued public awareness campaigns to educate both consumers and the beauty industry about the dangers of illegal tooth whitening and the need to seek treatment only from qualified oral healthcare professionals.'

While Trading Standards' 'Cost of Beauty' campaign and GDC prosecutions have had success, further enforcement and stronger penalties are essential to stop the spread of illegal treatments and protect the public from harm.'

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