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Watch Your Mouth! And Keep It Clean

by Winnie McCroy
EDGE Editor
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Whether you're looking for a new job or a new romance, you're going to want your smile looking good. But many commercial products contain toxic substances that can weaken your teeth and destroy their delicate enamel. Now, two new all-natural products -- **Oral Essentials** Whitening Formula Mouthwash and Simply Gum -- are on the market to give you fresh breath and white teeth, without artificial dyes or harsh chemicals.

Oral Essentials

"The whole concept of teeth whitening has gone through different stages since the 80s," said celebrity dentist Dr. Kourosh Maddahi, who counts comedian Kathy Griffin among his patients. "Since 1982, whitening has been achieved using carbamide peroxide or hydrogen peroxide formulas. This causes less sensitivity and still whitens teeth, but also oxidizes the enamel, which over time makes it weak and starts to cause sensitivity."

These products affect the dentinal tubules, the microscopic holes that go from the nerve to the surface of the tooth, thus making it sensitive to temperature. Enamel protects against that, but extended use of whitening products thins out the dentine, exposing it to chronic sensitivity. The abrasive peroxide ingredients now found in gels, toothpastes, and whitening kits can take away stains, but also remove part of the enamel.

"I have been a cosmetic dentist for close to 30 years, and have used all of these different whitening procedures," said Maddahi. "I kept seeing varied responses to whitening gels, with younger people whose nerves are bigger being more sensitive. Some even needed Vicodin for the violent shock to their teeth. So I started to look into other modes of whitening teeth."



The most frustrating thing for Maddahi was that a month after doing in-office whitening treatments, the stains were back, thanks to patients' daily consumption of coffee or tea. This prompted him to conceive of a daily-use whitening mouthwash people could use to keep their teeth white.

Working with a longtime periodontist Dr. Hessam Nowzari, PhD, Director of Advanced Periodontics at USC, Maddahi created an original mouthwash using organic aloe vera juice, Dead Sea salt, essential oils of sage, coconut and lemon, and the sugar substitute xylitol -- every ingredient needed to keep your gums healthy and breath fresh, with no dyes, preservative or chemicals. The formula removed surface stains from tea, coffee, red wine, green juice, and berries.

Maddahi credits the use of Dead Sea salt to Nowzari's decade-long study of Manila street kids suffering from AA bacteria, which causes gum disease. He instructed the kids to rub readily available sea salt on their gums daily, and later, observed that their gum disease had gone away.

"Once I developed the formula, I told him about the ingredients, and we worked together to find a balance, then gave it to a chemist to manufacture it locally in California," said Maddahi. "It was very difficult to develop something without preservatives."

The result was Oral Essentials Whitening Formula Mouthwash, an all-natural formula that you use for one minute, twice a day. Users see whitening effects in as little as three days.

A 16 oz. bottle costs about \$13, available on Amazon, Oral Essentials website, and Earth Bar, and lasts a full month (only one capful is needed, in the morning and at night).

"I'm now selling about 100 of the original formula and 100 of the whitening formula per month to my own clients," said Maddahi. "The key thing is there's no sensitivity, it's from all-naturally derived ingredients, and doesn't damage teeth no matter how much you use it. It's even certified non-toxic; you can swallow it, and nothing will happen."



Simply Gum

A similar desire to provide people with natural oral hygiene products inspired founder Caron Proschan to create **Simply Gum**, which Proschan claims is the first premium-level chewing gum created with no artificial flavors, preservatives or synthetics.

"It all started one day when Caron finished up a healthy lunch and popped a stick of neon blue gum in her mouth," said spokesperson Adeena Cohen. "Although nobody thinks neon blue is found in nature, she began looking at the ingredients, and realized it had 80 synthetic ingredients in it, including the

very vague term 'gum base,' which is FDA-approved, but still can contain plastic."

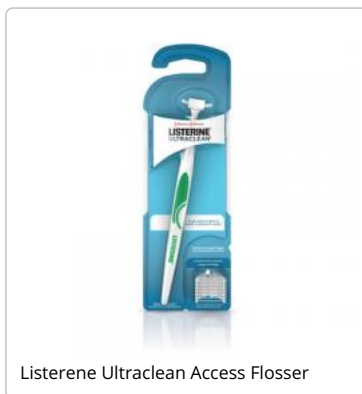
They scoured the market for other types of healthy gums, but saw only a gap in the offerings. With the social aspect of gum use at parties or on dates, she also wanted to make a premium quality brand, with aesthetically pleasing packaging. So Proschan developed her own product and founded Simply Gum.

"What makes us different is that we don't use plastics, and the ingredients are all natural," said Cohen. "There are two issues we found: the hidden ingredients in traditional gums like the toxic preservative BHT (butylated hydroxytoluene) and the artificial sweetener aspartame, which is potentially toxic."

Instead, they use the traditional chicle from the sap of a tree. They offer six flavors: mint, cinnamon, fennel, ginger, coffee, and maple, and say, "people prefer to have actual clean ingredients rather than colors not found in nature."

The biodegradable, earth-friendly product has been on the market for two years, and is made in New York. It costs \$2.99 for 15 pieces, and is available on Simply Gum's website, via Whole Foods and at Vitamin Shoppe stores.

"When people find out what gum base and the other products are, they are not pleased," said Cohen. "We took a product with no transparency and made it an all-natural premium brand."



Listerine Ultraclean Access Flosser

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Listerine Ultraclean Access Flosser

Easily get to hard-to-reach places with the long, ergonomic handle and non-slip grip; the high-tenacity gloss withstands breakage.

The Dirt Tongue Scraper

Sidestep major problems like thrush -- a particularly threat to PLWHAs -- and ensure fresher breath with this pure copper tongue scraper.

The Quip

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Winnie McCroy is the Women on the EDGE Editor, HIV/Health Editor, and Assistant Entertainment Editor for EDGE Media Network, handling all women's news, HIV health stories and theater reviews throughout the U.S. She has contributed to other publications, including The Village Voice, Gay City News, Chelsea Now and The Advocate, and lives in Brooklyn, New York.

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