



## Clark Howard Puts Teeth Whiteners To The Test

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**ATLANTA** -- It's a fact. Our smiles are getting brighter. According to the American Council of Cosmetic Dentistry teeth whitening is by far the most common procedure patients want. But what if you don't want to pay the big bucks for a cosmetic dentist to whiten your teeth? Channel 2 Consumer Advisor Clark Howard put some over the counter teeth whiteners to the test.

Smiling for the camera is serious business at the Atlanta Center for Cosmetic Dentistry. Dr. Debra King is an expert – she was on the TV show “Extreme Makeover.” Channel 2 asked her to look at the cheap end of teeth whitening – white strips.

We looked at three brands. Lisa Kimsey tried Rembrandt, Mel Stephens used Listerine Whitestrips and Carolyn Clayton sampled Crest Whitestrips Classics. Before they could use them, King took baseline tests. After taking notes on where each volunteer started, they went to work.

Carolyn had to wear the Crest Whitestrips twice a day for 30 minutes. “You kind of feel as if you don't speak clearly so it was a lot of hassle I would say,” said Carolyn.

Lisa had it easier – a half hour once a day. She did it every night. “It left a film, like a really thick film and I had to brush my teeth afterwards,” she said.

Mel had it the easiest. He used the Listerine strips twice a day but they dissolved in his mouth. “I think it's a good product and it's probably going to work out for a lot of people,” Mel said.

But the bottom line is what matters. How well do they work?

Professional whitening can get your teeth 5-8 shades lighter but it costs hundreds of dollars. How well did the cheaper white strips work?

First, we checked with Carolyn who used the Crest Whitestrips Classics. In two weeks, Carolyn's teeth got one shade lighter. It took her 14 hours of her time and \$25 to get there.

Next, we checked on Mel. He used the quick dissolve Listerine Whitestrips. His teeth got one and a half shades lighter. Like Carolyn, his strips cost about \$25 but he only spent 2 hours and 20 minutes of his time.

Lastly, Lisa used the Rembrandt product. She had the whitest teeth to begin with. She spent 7 hours of her time and two weeks of her whitener cost \$50. She got two shades lighter.

So what is King's take on the products? She said she wasn't surprised by the results. "I've had a lot of patients who have tried over the counter whitening gels because it is less expensive and then they come in and actually do the professional whitening," King said.

King said over the counter products work best for people who just want a little step up in the color of their teeth. For people who want a big boost, it's going to cost you big bucks.

Professional teeth whitening can cost up to \$800. But Clark said many cosmetic dentists offer specials so don't be afraid to ask dentistry offices about what specials they have now or are planning in the future.