

Acid erosion of teeth

This is a condition where teeth are gradually worn away.

Erosion is different from tooth decay and is not caused by sugar; instead acids from foods and drinks (sometimes stomach acid) soften the tooth directly. If this happens often, the teeth may gradually wear away.

Who is affected?

Erosion can affect any age group and is an increasingly common problem. It is especially common in teenagers because of frequent fizzy drinks and fruit juice consumption.

How to recognise acid erosion



In the early stages it is not very obvious but the teeth will lose some of their natural detail. Your dentist will be able to detect these changes.



As it progresses, front teeth may appear slightly 'glassy' or transparent near their biting edges, and may chip and be sensitive.



The back teeth may become worn and can also be sensitive.



In advanced cases, teeth become noticeably flattened and shortened. Teeth may 'die' leading to abscesses.

Causes of acid erosion

Acidic drinks and foods, consumed frequently will cause erosion. Another source of acid can be from the stomach during reflux and vomiting.

Examples of acidic foods and drink:

- Pure fruit juices & Smoothies; most squashes, cordials and flavoured waters;
- ALL fizzy drinks including diet and low sugar versions;
- Sports and energy drinks;
- Green tea, herbal teas etc., black tea without milk;
- 'Sour' sweets and candies;
- All fruits – you still need your 5-a-day but don't 'graze';
- Vinegar, pickles, ketchup and brown sauce;
- Yoghurt;
- Vitamin C supplements.

How to stop acid erosion

Limit acidic food and drinks to mealtimes only.

Do not sip drinks over an extended period. Don't carry a bottle around all day (except water – **not** the flavoured variety!).

Don't 'swish' drinks around the mouth before swallowing – this exposes more teeth to the acids and for longer.

Safe drinks include water and milk.

If stomach acid has entered the mouth, rinse with water. See your GP if this happens often.

In all cases, after acid exposure **DO NOT BRUSH YOUR TEETH FOR AT LEAST AN HOUR AFTERWARDS**. The tooth surface will have been softened by the acid and tooth brushing will wear this softened layer away. Waiting will allow saliva to help neutralize the acid effect.

Rinse with water. Eating cheese will help with neutralisation. Chew sugar free gum for 20 minutes to stimulate saliva.

What can be done for acid eroded teeth?

Repairs with white fillings and crowns can help, but not all tooth surface loss can be replaced.

Fluoride varnish and mouthwashes may be recommended, especially if the teeth have become sensitive. High fluoride toothpaste may be prescribed.

Use specialised toothpaste which can be bought 'over the counter'.

Your dentist will be able to advise you but prevention of erosion is the most important step.

**For further advice or information please contact:
Coventry Community Dental Service, Oral Health Promotion
024 7696 1556 or 024 7696 1327**

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