

## Regurgitation problems

May be associated with

- EARLY PREGNANCY ■ TUMMY/GASTRIC BUG
- BIG NIGHT OUT ■ EATING DISORDER

Regurgitation of stomach contents or gastric juices cause severe erosion and existing decay problems to accelerate. Gastric juices contain strong acids that cause damage to tooth enamel and exposed root surfaces. After vomiting, the sour, unpleasant taste means that acid is present in the mouth and the surface of the teeth become softened.

### When this happens

- rinse the mouth thoroughly with water, and rub toothpaste over your teeth with your finger - this will help to freshen your mouth, and toughen your teeth.
- avoid brushing your teeth until the enamel has had a chance to recover and harden (about 30 minutes after applying toothpaste). Always use a soft-bristled toothbrush to reduce the wear on teeth that are exposed to acid attack.

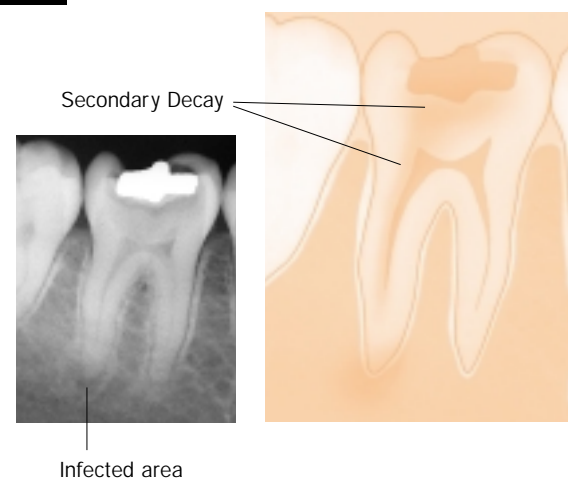
*Don't delay if you think you have rapidly progressing decay. This type of decay quickly damages the nerve and blood supply to the tooth, and can become very painful. The damage inside the tooth is usually much more severe than you can see from looking in the mirror.*

An X-ray may be necessary to determine whether a tooth is sound or decayed. In Figure 3 the darkened areas of the tooth and root show where decay has spread. The cloudy area around the root shows that there is an infection.

### Further information

Dental Practice Education Research Unit Dental School  
The University of Adelaide South Australia 5005  
Toll Free 1800 805 738 Fax (08) 8303 4858  
Website //www.adelaide.edu.au/socprev-dent/dperu

Figure 3 X-ray of Tooth with abscessed root



Frequently a secondary decay may occur at the edge (margin) of a filling. As the decay progresses, you may notice your tooth becoming sensitive to sweet or cold foods and drinks. *The filling may not fall out, however, the tooth may become infected, requiring expensive treatment or the tooth to be extracted.*

### Checklist

- brush twice a day with FLUORIDE toothpaste
- don't skip regular tooth-brushing
- avoid sweets and sticky snacks
- cut down on **sugar** in your tea and coffee
- limit soft drinks, cordial and fruit drinks
- don't put off dental visits
- use a high-strength fluoride toothpaste
- "spit and don't rinse" after brushing
- snack wisely or not at all
- regular meals & healthy eating habits
- fluoride mouth-rinse or a smear of toothpaste after sweet foods and at bedtime

## Young adults and dental decay

*protecting your teeth from decay problems*



Colgate Caries Control Program

*Young adults have the opportunity of keeping their teeth strong and problem-free for life.*

*Leaving school with very few fillings, and excellent oral health, what can go wrong?*

*You can't go wrong...can you?*

### What can go wrong?

Things can be too good; too easy. You may have years of dental visits without dental problems. Protected by fluoride in the water supply and in toothpaste, you become independent and confident that your teeth are 'bullet-proof' ... But are they? So what is changing?

- Lifestyle changes
- 'Grazing' instead of regular meals
- Eat-and-run
- Skipping brushing
- Smoking and using drugs
- Stress
- Fast food/junk food/convenience food
- Sweet snacks and soft drinks
- Too busy to make that visit to the dentist
- Budget problems - no money to visit the dentist
- Moving out of home
- Finding a job
- Eating disorders
- Freedom to make your own choices; to stay up and party all night; to establish your own rules
- Freedom from discipline imposed by school and parents.

Figure 1 Stephan Curve - acid level in mouth following consumption of food or drink

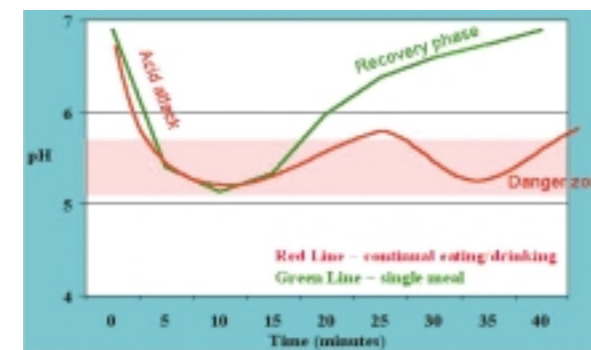
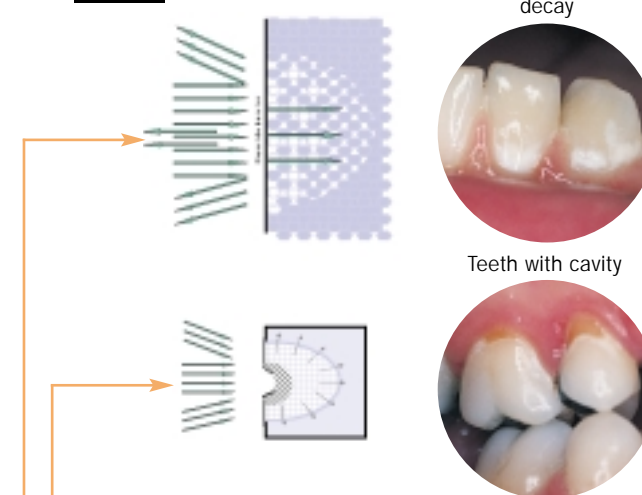


Figure 2 Tooth at risk, Teeth with 'white spot' decay, Teeth with cavity



Even after a filling has been placed, the tooth will never be as strong and resistant to future damage as it was when it was structurally sound.

## Acid Attack VS Natural Recovery

EVERY TIME we eat or drink, our teeth are under attack from food acids and plaque acid produced from carbohydrates and SUGARS by bacteria present in our mouths. The acid attack lasts for approximately 20 minutes, until food particles are diluted and washed away by saliva.

The mouth now enters recovery mode - minuscule quantities of tooth minerals dissolved during the acid attack phase are replaced and rebuilt - but that happens only if there is enough time before the next acid challenge.

There is a constant balancing between demineralisation and remineralisation in a healthy mouth. Continual acid attack destroys the balancing act, and below the surface, a honeycomb effect of tiny holes develops. The tooth becomes fragile, and over time the weakened structure caves in. Once a hole has penetrated the tough enamel of the tooth surface, the way is open for bacteria to enter and the decay process to speed up dramatically.

*We can easily get into a habit of eating sweet foods and drinking sugary or acidic drinks continually, without realising that we are risking major problems with our teeth.*

Decay Decay Decay