
Your dental professional will explain how to use fluoride products effectively

Your Checklist

- > drink more **WATER**
- > restrict acidic foods and drinks to main meals
- > limit soft drinks, cordial and fruit drinks; drink with a straw; avoid sipping/swishing
- > snack wisely or not at all
- > brush twice a day with **FLUORIDE** toothpaste and soft brush
- > chew sugar-free gum
- > rinse with **WATER** after acidic foods/drinks
- > visit a dental professional if you think you have erosion

If you have been told that you have dental erosion, or you are a wine assessor, or have a dry mouth, reflux or vomiting problem, check with your dental professional which of the following apply to you

- > “spit and don’t rinse” after brushing
- > use a high-strength fluoride toothpaste
- > rinse immediately and avoid brushing for 30 minutes after vomiting
- > use fluoride mouth-rinse or a smear of toothpaste after acidic foods/drinks and at bedtime

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Colgate Oral Care

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What's wearing away
your teeth?

Tooth Erosion

Special Topic Pamphlet No. 2

All teeth experience some amount of wear as we age. Your dental professional may tell you that your teeth show signs of DENTAL EROSION.

Erosion occurs when enamel is dissolved from tooth surfaces, and teeth may appear shorter and have visibly worn surfaces.

Dental Erosion

Most people know that eating too much sugar can cause tooth decay. But even people with healthy eating habits and who brush frequently can get dental erosion. Dental erosion is very different to decay, but can be just as bad for teeth.

Excessive acid in some foods and drinks dissolve or eat away the enamel surface of the teeth.

By brushing straight afterwards the damage is made even worse.

When strong acid is frequently present, the mouth's natural defence system can no longer deal with the problem, and faster tooth wear occurs. Sometimes erosion results in the softer inner part of the tooth being exposed, which usually causes severe sensitivity.



Figure 1: Badly eroded upper front teeth of a wine judge who tastes as many as two hundred wines a day. Social wine drinking usually does not cause damage to teeth.

Most erosion problems are caused by dietary habits

Acids are present in:

- > soft drinks – diet and regular
- > sports drinks
- > fruit juice, fruit drinks, cordial and citrus fruits
- > chewable Vitamin C tablets
- > vinegar and pickles
- > gastric juices (any cause of frequent vomiting or gastric reflux, hiatus hernia, morning sickness or bulimia).

Some natural remedies can be highly acidic, and potentially damaging to the teeth. Cider vinegar, lemon juice, herbal teas and Vitamin C mouth rinses should be used with caution; always follow with rinsing and drinking water.

Figure 2: Tooth erosion



Controlling dental erosion

- > Change to non-acidic alternatives eg flavoured milk instead of soft drinks.
- > The effect of acidic foods and drinks is reduced when they are eaten with other foods. Chewing a small piece of cheese or drinking water at the end of a meal helps to restore the mouth to a non-acidic balance.
- > Avoid excessive consumption of juice and most fruits between meals.
- > Drink fruit juices and acidic soft drinks through a straw as this causes less damage.
- > Take Vitamin C in tablet form without chewing or sucking.

Dry mouth and erosion

Saliva is the mouth's own cleaning system – it dilutes and washes away food particles and buffers acids. If you often have a dry mouth, erosion may damage your teeth more quickly.

Dry mouth can be caused by some medications. Your doctor may be able to prescribe an alternative if your medication is causing dry mouth or gastric reflux.

Chew sugar-free gum to reduce dry mouth.

Figure 3: Erosion from bulimia



Acid reflux or vomiting problem

This cause of erosion can be the most difficult to control. **Gastric juices contain strong acids that can cause damage to tooth enamel and exposed root surfaces. After vomiting, the sour, unpleasant taste shows that acid is present, and may be softening the surface of the teeth.**

When this happens

- 1 Rinse the mouth thoroughly with water, milk or fluoride mouth rinse
- 2 Rub toothpaste over your teeth with your finger – this will help to freshen your mouth, and toughen your teeth.
- 3 Avoid brushing your teeth until the enamel has had a chance to recover (about 30 minutes). Always use a soft-bristled toothbrush to reduce the wear on teeth that are exposed to acid attack.