

## Avoiding acid erosion

Acid erosion is the result of acidic chemicals attacking the teeth and mouth. This can cause a variety of oral health problems, such as tooth enamel and dentine loss, tooth discolouration and hypersensitivity, rampant cavities, dehydration and irritation of the soft tissue, and soreness and burning of the throat and tongue.

Acid erosion can also accelerate the wear resulting from clenching, grinding and improper brushing techniques, such as scrubbing.

What's the cause?

Diet is a major factor in the cause of acid erosion. Fruit juice, sports drinks, cordials, softdrinks, acidic or sweet lollies, chewable vitamin C tablets, citrus fruits and apples can all aggravate the condition.

And it's important to note that it's not just what you eat and drink that counts, but also how and when you do so. Slow sipping, frequent drinking and swishing before swallowing are all habits that prolong contact between acid and your teeth. And the worst times are between meals, after physical activity and at bedtime.

Gastric disturbances, morning sickness, reflux and vomiting will also dramatically increase the levels of acidic chemicals in the mouth. A dry mouth will also aggravate the condition.

How to minimise acid erosion

- Don't dwell too long on acidic drinks-this constantly tops up the acidic chemicals in your mouth. Try to finish them in one go.
- Rinse your mouth with plain water immediately after consuming acidic food or drink.
- Brush your teeth after 30 minutes or so. (Don't brush immediately after eating/drinking, as the enamel is weaker.)
- Brush with a baking soda toothpaste-this will help to neutralise the acid.
- Use a soft toothbrush and a gentle motion-try holding your toothbrush like a pencil.
- Drink with a straw-this will see most of the fluid bypass the teeth.
- Avoid "acidic rehydration". Cut down on acidic drinks, and totally avoid them when the mouth is dry-between meals, after physical activity and at bedtime.
- Chew sugarless gum to promote saliva flow-saliva acts as a buffer against acids.
- If reflux or vomiting occurs, make up a baking soda mouth rinse to buffer the acid-simply stir half a teaspoon of baking soda into a glass of water.
- Your dentist may suggest using a neutral pH home fluoride treatment.
- Check any medication to see if it causes nausea, vomiting or dry mouth.
- Exercise extra caution when using a mouthguard, as this will hold the acid against the teeth.

See also ...

- Personal dental hygiene plan
- Sugar & your smile
- Pregnancy