

Preventing Tooth Erosion

Tooth erosion, or tooth wear, is the loss of the surrounding tooth structure. This loss occurs when the hard part of your teeth—which is called the enamel—is worn away by acid. Over time, this erosion can leave your teeth sensitive, cracked, and discolored.

What causes tooth erosion?

Acid is the main cause of tooth erosion. So, drinking carbonated beverages, energy and sports drinks, and pure fruit juice, which all contain high levels of acid, can cause tooth erosion, especially when consumed in large amounts. Certain medical conditions, including acid reflux and bulimia, also can cause tooth erosion because they cause increased levels of stomach acids in the mouth.

What are the signs and symptoms of tooth erosion?

Tooth erosion can present in a variety of ways. Below are some common signs and symptoms:

- Sensitivity—Since protective enamel is wearing away, you may feel a twinge of pain when you consume hot, cold, or sweet foods and drinks. As more enamel wears away, teeth can become increasingly sensitive.
- Discoloration—Teeth can become yellow as the dentin, the second layer of the tooth, is exposed.
- Rounded teeth—Your teeth may have a rounded or “sand-blasted” look.

- Transparency—Your front teeth may appear slightly transparent near the biting edges.
- Cracks—Small cracks and rough areas may appear at the edges of your teeth.
- Cupping—Small dents may appear on the chewing surfaces of your teeth, and fillings might appear to be rising up out of the teeth.

What can I do to prevent tooth erosion?

You can help prevent tooth erosion from occurring by taking these simple steps:

- Cut down on your consumption of carbonated beverages, sports and energy drinks, and pure fruit juice.
- Drink acidic drinks quickly and with a straw. This helps prevent acid from coming in contact with your teeth. Also, don't swish these liquids around or hold them in your mouth for long periods of time.
- After consuming acidic drinks, rinse your mouth with water to neutralize the acids and wait at least one hour before brushing your teeth.
- Chew sugar-free gum, which helps your mouth produce more saliva to remineralize your teeth.
- Brush with a soft toothbrush and be sure your toothpaste contains a high amount of fluoride.
- Don't let your child consume highly acidic drinks or fruit juices in his or her sippy cup or bottle.



How can I deal with the sensitivity caused by tooth erosion?

You can reduce sensitivity by using specially formulated toothpaste or over-the-counter enamel-building products. However, always be sure to check with your general dentist before you try any new dental products.

Tooth erosion impacts everyone in different ways. Make sure you speak with your dentist about your oral hygiene and find out what else you can do to protect yourself from tooth erosion.



KnowYourTeeth.com

Brought to you by the Academy of General Dentistry (AGD), this website answers important dental health questions, offers the latest information on current treatments, provides tips for first-rate oral hygiene, and helps visitors find highly qualified general dentists near where they live.

The AGD is a member of the Partnership for Healthy Mouths, Healthy Lives, a first-of-its-kind national dental coalition composed of 35 leading dental health organizations. Look for more information about the Kids' Healthy Mouths campaign at www.2min2x.org.

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