

## Oral Health Connection

### *Recognizing the causes and prevention of tooth enamel erosion*

When it comes to good oral hygiene, tooth enamel is one of the most important factors in protecting teeth. As the strongest substance in the human body, the purpose of tooth enamel is to protect teeth from deterioration caused by chewing and biting, extreme hot or cold temperatures, and acids and chemicals.

Tooth enamel covers the dentin on each tooth. When the enamel erodes, it exposes the dentin which, when contacted by certain substances, can stimulate the nerves within the tooth. This is one of the reasons teeth may be sensitive to hot or cold temperatures.

#### **Several factors may contribute to tooth enamel erosion:**

- Drinking too many soft drinks or sugary fruit drinks, or eating a lot of candies and sour foods, and allowing the sugar from these substances to sit on the teeth.
- Brushing teeth too vigorously.
- Supplements or other drugs containing a high acid content (e.g., aspirin, Vitamin C).
- Dry mouth or a lack of an appropriate amount of saliva can contribute to erosion, as saliva helps wash away leftover food and neutralize acids.
- Acid reflux disease, or heartburn, passes stomach acids to the mouth.
- Teeth grinding.

#### **There are many ways to help prevent tooth enamel erosion:**

- Rinse your mouth with water after eating or drinking something high in sugar or acid and increase the amount of water you drink throughout the day.
- Ask a dentist to recommend toothpaste designed to protect against erosion or reduce tooth sensitivity.
- Use a soft-bristled toothbrush and avoid brushing too hard.
- Use a fluoride toothpaste or mouth rinse, as it will contribute to stronger teeth.
- After having foods and drinks that are very acidic, eat or drink something that will neutralize the acid (e.g., milk, cheese).
- Chew a piece of sugar-free gum after eating, which will increase saliva flow and help wash away leftover food and bacteria.
- Cut back on foods and drinks that have high acid contents.

Tooth enamel erosion is a problem that isn't often discussed but it can become a real issue among those consistently practicing the habits that contribute to it. By being aware of the causes of tooth enamel erosion and the methods of preventing it, a person's oral health can be improved and future dental difficulties can be avoided.

**You can find more oral health tips by logging in to  
our online member portal at [DentalCarePlus.com](http://DentalCarePlus.com).**

**T H E P L U S I S S E R V I C E**