



AUSTRALIAN DENTAL
ASSOCIATION INC.

TOOTH

EROSION

Fact Sheet

Tooth Erosion in children and teenagers

Dental Health Week

Research indicates that Australian children and teenagers are showing increased rates of tooth erosion.

A recent study, examining 714 students aged six to 15 years from eight schools in Australia, found 68 per cent of students had at least one tooth that exhibited signs of erosion. This rate is higher than those identified in similar studies of children with a rate of 41 per cent in the US and moderate erosion in 51 per cent of children in the UK.

Australian children and teenagers can expect to keep their teeth for life. The impact of tooth erosion, which is irreversible, can be a lifetime of treatment or discomfort. Therefore, preventing or at least minimising the impact of tooth erosion is paramount from an early age.

Diet is the major contributor to tooth erosion, with soft drink and fruit juice consumption consistently the most common contributor.

A government commissioned survey of 900 students in Victoria aged 12 to 17 years found approximately 80 per cent consumed sugar-containing soft drinks regularly. Ten per cent of students drank three cans of high sugar soft drink per day, with a further 35 per cent and 37 per cent respectively reporting they drank two cans or one can of high sugar soft drink per day.

Soft drinks, sports drinks, energy drinks, fruit juices and cordials have high acid levels and play a major role in causing tooth erosion. Consumption of these drinks should be limited and children and teens should be encouraged to drink water (preferably fluoridated tap water) as much as possible.

Preventing or minimising tooth erosion

Tooth erosion is irreversible so preventing or at least minimising the impact is highly important from an early age. The ADA's recommendations for preventing or minimising tooth erosion include getting into the following habits:

- Avoid holding or 'swishing' drinks in the mouth as this increases acid exposure to teeth.
- Use a straw as much as possible to minimise the acid exposure to teeth.
- If you do drink an acidic and/or sugary beverage, drink it chilled as cooler temperatures have been shown to be less likely to cause tooth erosion.
- After drinking acidic and/or sugary beverages, don't brush your teeth right away – brushing can remove the softened tooth enamel (resulting from the acid exposure), increasing the amount of tooth loss. Wait one hour before brushing teeth.
- Instead of brushing, rinse with water – this will help remove any acids remaining in the mouth.
- Fluoride mouthwashes without alcohol will rinse acids away and the fluoride will re-mineralise the tooth surface making it more resistant to acid attacks.
- Chewing sugar free gum can stimulate saliva flow and rinse acids away.

