

White teeth might not be so healthy

EVERYONE knows that white teeth mean healthy teeth. It's obvious, isn't it?

Well, no, actually. That's not always the case. Professor Andrew Eder of the London Tooth Wear Centre says it's a common misconception that gleaming gnashers are a sign all's well in the dental department.

If they're kept that way with the help of whitening toothpaste, for instance, the enamel could have been permanently worn away.

The same is true of some tooth whitening procedures, too.

"There's the problem of not knowing the long-term effects of some of the newer in-surgery or over-the-counter products," said Prof Eder.

"On the contrary, yellow teeth may in fact be healthier.

"A common cause of yellow teeth is they have absorbed fluoride as they've developed.

"They have higher quantities of the mineral fluorapatite, giving them a yellow appearance, but they may be very healthy," he added.

And that's not the only common myth Prof Eder is happy to bust.

If you think you should stick to known brands when looking for a good toothpaste, think again.

by Ian Towers

"This is not always the case," he said. "When choosing a toothpaste, the two most important things to look for are that it contains fluoride and that it's not abrasive.

"Some of the organic health toothpastes may not contain fluoride."

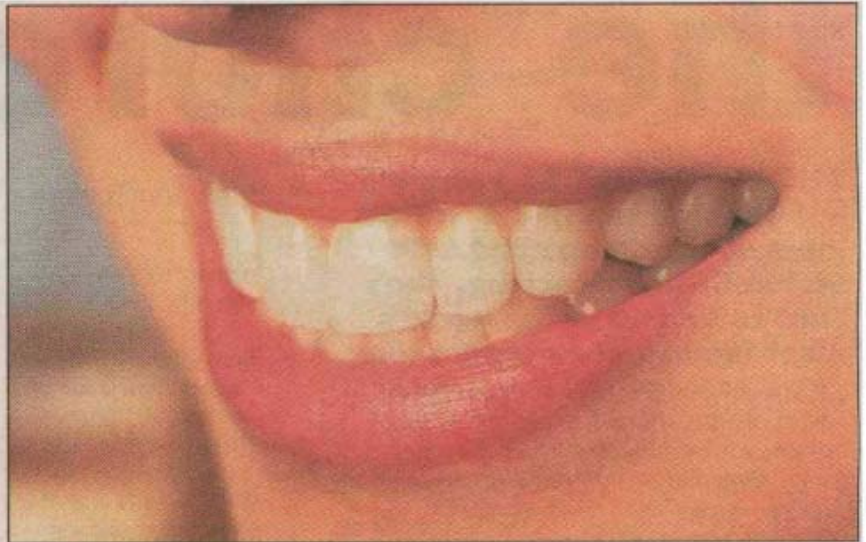
People who drink diet fizzy drinks or even fruit juice because they think that's better for their teeth could be in for a shock.

"Whilst the sugar in fizzy drinks is a tooth decay problem, not everyone realises that these drinks are also very acidic and dissolve the thin layer of enamel that covers teeth," added Prof Eder

"Even sparkling diet drinks are a problem. Although they'll normally contain less damaging sugars, they're still very acidic.

"Fruit juices are also acidic and will similarly attack tooth enamel.

"The thing to do is



limit sparkling drinks to special occasions and to dilute fruit juices in order to avoid both decay and loss of enamel."

Prof Eder also has some advice for older people.

"If you're becoming 'longer in the tooth' when smiling in the mirror, or if your gums bleed when brushing

your teeth, be sure to get them checked before teeth start to become loose, as they could then simply fall out," he said.

"And as we get older, many patients start to take a number of medications. Some of these can have an impact of your dental and oral health.

"For example, some

blood thinners can cause problems when having dental treatment, whilst other medicines can cause a dry mouth which often encourages more tooth decay.

"Always ask your GP about such potential problems and always let your dentist know of any new conditions or medicines."

Hazel's song of dental drama

NOBODY likes going to the dentist, but singer and musician Hazel Winter has put music to her dental nightmare.

She first began suffering with toothache three years ago, then things went from bad to worse over a six-month period.

Hazel saw eight dentists, had five courses of antibiotics, a complicated extraction, emergency surgery and a large supply of pain-relieving drugs.

So, using the tune of the Dolly Parton song, Jolene, Hazel came up with Codeine, with lyrics like, "Codeine, codeine, why don't you take my abscess away?"

The song was filmed and the video has now been posted on YouTube.