

# No more sugar-coating the truth about tooth wear

**F**EW CAN have failed to notice the big governmental push towards reducing sugar in our diet. The predominant reasons for this are twofold – first that there is an obesity epidemic and second because our children are losing their teeth to decay and tooth wear at an alarming rate – and unnecessarily.

Indeed, the latest figures from the government indicate that nearly half of 15-year-olds and a third of 12-year-olds have untreated decay or fillings, or have lost teeth to decay – and this is affecting their adult teeth. Meanwhile, just over a quarter of children in the UK aged 12 have suffered tooth-surface loss, increasing to almost one-third by the age of 15.

High-profile figures such as Jamie Oliver are working hard to educate families about decay and obesity and we do have an

**Professor Eder: Some otherwise 'healthy' foods may still be bad for teeth**

impending sugar tax on some soft drinks, which should help to some extent.

However, what is less frequently discussed is the fact that many of those sugar-laden beverages also contribute to tooth wear through enamel erosion.

Professor Andrew Eder, an expert in tooth wear and clinical director of the London Tooth Wear Centre, says: "Tooth wear, which affects both children and adults and is a growing problem in the UK, is caused by consuming acidic foods and drinks; the acid attacks the outer surface of the teeth.

"Culprits include smoothies, fruit juices, sports beverages and fizzy drinks, as well as some foods otherwise considered to be healthy, such as quinoa, yoghurt and honey.

"Over time – and particularly in patients who also grind

their teeth – tooth wear may result in short and unattractive teeth, as well as rough or sensitive teeth.

"If left to continue its damaging course, teeth may require extensive and expensive restorative treatment further down the line."

The good news is that there are some simple steps that can help to prevent tooth wear:

- Drink still water or low-fat milk between meals.
- Limit fruit juice to once per day and avoid fizzy drinks.
- Rinse the mouth with water for 15 to 30 seconds after consuming acidic foods or drinks.
- Chew sugar-free gum or eat a piece of cheese after consuming acidic food or drink.
- Wait at least an hour to brush teeth after consuming acidic foods or drinks.
- Use an age-appropriate toothpaste containing fluoride and a non-abrasive toothbrush.
- Use an age-appropriate fluoridated mouthwash every day – at a different time from tooth brushing – as well as before or after consuming acidic foods and drinks, to help limit their erosive potential.
- Wear an appropriate mouthguard at night to protect against grinding and clenching habits.

Finally, says Professor Eder: "If you're worried about tooth wear, tell your dentist. They are, after all, there to help and will be able to make a diagnosis, provide guidance or refer you on, if appropriate."

Alternatively, a specialist practice such as the London Tooth Wear Centre, in central London, can help manage the problem by using a combination of the latest clinical techniques and a holistic approach.

[toothwear.co.uk](http://toothwear.co.uk),  
[info@toothwear.co.uk](mailto:info@toothwear.co.uk),  
020 7486 7180

