

Hard to swallow

BY PROF ANDREW EDER

Anticipating the taste of something we intend to eat or drink is a sensation we all enjoy. We might then counter that keenness by looking at the nutritional details; we know, after all, to choose things that are low in salt, high in fibre, low in “bad” fats, low in sugar and so on.

But there is another important point that is less well known — that acidic foods and drinks attack the outer surface of the teeth. This is called tooth erosion, and it may result in short, unattractive, rough or sensitive teeth.

Culprits include fruit juices, smoothies, sports beverages and fizzy drinks (including sugar-free), as well as foods usually considered healthy, such as citrus fruits, yoghurt and honey.

Help prevent further damage:

- Drink still water or low fat milk between meals
- Limit fruit juices to once per day and avoid fizzy drinks
- Rinse your mouth with water for 15 to 30 seconds after consumption
- Chew sugar-free gum or eat a piece of cheese after consumption
- Wait at least an hour to brush your



Tooth wear: don't end up like this

teeth after consumption

- Use toothpaste that contains fluoride and a non-abrasive toothbrush
- Use fluoridated mouthwash every day at a different time from tooth brushing, as well as before or after acidic foods and drinks.

If erosion is left to continue, teeth may later require extensive and expensive restorative treatment. So, the next time you have a fancy for a snack or drink, along with checking its nutritional values, consider whether it is acidic and make an informed, healthy decision. Otherwise, you may be in for a nasty taste of things to come.

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