

High Sugar, High Acid—

A Damaging Duo for Teeth

We all know that too much sugar is bad for our teeth. What isn't as commonly known is that the corrosive effects of sugar are worsened when combined with high levels of acids, found commonly in foods and beverages - especially sodas. Working together, highly acidic, high-sugar foods, when consumed frequently, can irreversibly erode tooth enamel.

“Although it can go unnoticed for some time, the erosion of tooth enamel can compromise the strength of a tooth and lead to sensitivity to hot or cold foods,” said Max Anderson, DDS, a national oral health advisor for Delta Dental Plans Association. “Over time, dental erosion can eventually lead to decay where teeth and gums meet.”

Adults who consumed 30 or more ounces of soda per day, equivalent to about 2-1/2 cans, had approximately 20 percent more decayed, missing, or filled tooth surfaces than those who drank six ounces or less each day. A number of reports from dentists also indicate that people who frequently drink large amounts of highly-sugared, highly-caffeinated beverages often showed signs of significant dental destruction.



In addition to the obvious approach of avoiding high-sugar, acidic beverages or consuming them in moderation, Dr. Anderson suggests working with saliva, the body's natural way of neutralizing acids in the mouth.

“Stimulating saliva flow is the key,” said Dr. Anderson. “Chewing sugar-free gum or rinsing your mouth with water after drinking a soda are simple ways to neutralize the acids left on teeth by certain foods and beverages.” He also urges people to stick with a solid program of oral hygiene, including brushing after meals, flossing daily, and scheduling regular visits to the dentist.