

Bad habits that can damage your teeth

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Who knew that innocent daily habits may be reducing the life of your teeth? A few typical but harmful unconscious actions in your everyday life could be eroding your teeth, infecting your gums, and causing harm to your oral health. Although many of these habits don't have immediate effects, they can do irreparable damage to your teeth over time.



Don't drink your enamel away

A lot of the things you drink can wear down your teeth.

- **Coffee:** Besides being acidic, coffee's dark colour can stain teeth even more severely than tobacco. Caffeine causes dry mouth, which leads to bacterial buildup on your teeth, gums, and tongue.
- **Carbonated soft drinks:** Regular and diet soft drink consumption have been linked with tooth erosion and decay. Soft drinks can have up to 11 teaspoons of sugar per serving and contain phosphoric and citric acids, which eat away at tooth enamel. Diet soft drinks let you skip the sugar, but they may have even more acid in the form of artificial sweeteners.
- **Red and white wine:** Acids in red and white wine contain erosive acid, allowing stains to penetrate teeth deeply. Red wines carry some ingredients that will not only dry your mouth out and make your teeth sticky, but they will also discolour your teeth. White wine has ingredients that eat away at your teeth, taking food stains even deeper into the teeth.
- **Citrus fruits and juices:** While citrus fruits are healthy and nutritious in many ways, their acidic content can erode tooth enamel over time. Be sure to drink plenty of water after eating citrus fruits and dilute juice with water to help lessen adverse effects.

Biting, chewing, nibbling, and grinding

Your teeth should only be used to chew food, but what you eat also affects your teeth.

- **Using teeth as a tool:** Our teeth are a go-to tool for removing clothing tags, cutting tape, or opening a bag of snacks. Using your teeth as tools can cause them to crack or chip, as teeth are built to withstand vertical forces, not lateral forces. Instead, keep scissors, bottle openers, and other tools handy.
- **Chewing on ice:** Munching on ice cubes can chip or even crack your teeth. Don't bite on pens and pencils, either. You'll wear down the edges of your teeth, potentially causing pain and fractures.

- **Hard candy and gummies** – both hard and chewy varieties – saturate your mouth with sugar over several minutes, giving bacteria plenty of time to increase.
- **Nail biting:** Biting your nails can wear down the enamel and lead to jaw and tooth misalignment. Continuous nail biting can cause chipped teeth and impede your healthy smile efforts.
- **Grinding teeth, or bruxism:** Many people grind their teeth when they are asleep, often without realising it. Letting bruxism go untreated can lead to severe consequences such as cracked teeth, worn-down enamel, gum recession, headache, or jaw pain. If you suspect signs of bruxism, visit your dentist, who can make a precise evaluation and give proper advice for treatment. Wearing a mouthguard at night can prevent the damage caused by grinding while sleeping.

Bad habits that are ruining more than just your teeth

- **Smoking:** Smoking increases your risk of gum disease and also tooth loss. Cigarettes, as well as other tobacco products, can stain teeth and cause them to fall out due to gum disease. Vaping also stains teeth and causes dry mouth. Tobacco can cause cancer in the mouth, lips, and tongue. If you were looking for another reason to quit, consider your smile.
- **Brushing too hard:** Brushing your teeth too hard can irritate your gums, induce gum recession, erode tooth enamel, and create dental sensitivity. It can reverse all of the hard work you do to keep your mouth healthy and oral health has a significant role in overall health. Choose a toothbrush with soft bristles to avoid brushing too hard, and replace it every 3 to 4 months or when the bristles show symptoms of wear.
- **Mouth piercings:** Tongue and lip piercings can cause damage to your gums and teeth. Biting down on the metal stud can crack a tooth. And when metal rubs against the gums, it can cause gum damage that may lead to tooth loss. The mouth is a breeding ground for bacteria, and piercings raise the risk of infections and sores. Discuss the health risks with your dentist first.
- **Playing sports with no mouth guard:** Whether you play soccer, rugby, hockey, or any other contact sport, get in the game with a mouth guard. Without it, your teeth could get chipped or knocked out when the action gets rough. Self-fitting mouth guards may be purchased at a sports outlet, but rather have a mouth guard custom-made by your dentist.
- **Avoiding a dental check-up:** Avoiding a dental check-up is the one bad habit one can quickly rectify. Going for regular – twice-a-year– dental check-ups ensure the timely detection of oral and other dental problems.

If you're guilty because of these bad dental habits, rather be safe than sorry. Protect and repair your teeth by visiting your dentist.

References and sources consulted:

WebMD: www.webmd.com/oral-health/ss/slideshow-teeth-wreckers

The Oaks Dental Centre: www.theoaksdentalcenter.com/6-bad-habits-that-destroy-your-teeth/

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