



## Are your teeth melting away?

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### **Sure, you brush and floss**

just the way you're supposed to, "religiously" you might

say. But still, your teeth are under threat!

Tooth enamel is the strongest substance in the human body. This hard outer layer of the teeth is designed to protect teeth from daily wear and tear as you bite and chew your way through the day. It also protects teeth against temperature extremes from hot and cold foods and drinks. And the enamel also guards against the corrosive effects of acids and chemicals.

Dental erosion is the gradual dissolving of your teeth (called acidic dissolution). As this occurs, the tooth enamel softens and becoming less protective of the underlying dentin (the middle layer of the tooth which protects the inner core (pulp) of the tooth. This is followed by structural tooth loss.

The process of dental erosion is caused by a variety of factors including acids in food and drink.

Think of soft drinks including colas (especially diet), citrus flavours, energy and sports drinks, and yes, wine. Acidic foods include sour candies, oranges, grapefruit (and their juices) and others. Acid reflux also contributes as stomach acid is regurgitated. And ironically, too much brushing can also contribute, especially if using an especially abrasive paste.

There are steps you can take to reduce dental erosion, most quite simple. Start by limiting consumption of acidic beverages, including sugary acidic drinks which

offer the double whammy of erosion and encouraging cavities. After consuming these, rinse your mouth out with water to wash away much of the acid.

When consuming acidic foods or vinegary items, combine them with other foods to reduce the effect of the acids. Chewing sugarless gum will also increase saliva helping to rinse even more. If that gum contains xylitol, it also reduces acids directly.

Drink acidic drinks with a straw. This helps acids to bypass the teeth. And avoid swishing acidic drinks around in your mouth (sorry, wine fans).

To counter the acids from a meal, finish off with a glass of milk or a piece of cheese. This will neutralize acids and add a little calcium to your diet. And it's a good idea to wait an hour before brushing your teeth after exposure to acids which leave enamel soft and more

prone to erosion during brushing. When you do brush, use a less abrasive paste and soft-bristled brush. If you're using an electric toothbrush, be

careful not to overdo it—it is so easy, after all.

For your teeth, sour can be just as bad as sweet. Beware of the acids you consume, as much as you are of the sugars. Both will be attacking your teeth.

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sour can be just as bad as sweet.*