

Soda Attack

Soft drinks, sport or energy drinks, hurt hard enamel



As summer temperatures rise so will people's thirst. Unfortunately, many people will grab a pop or ice tea instead of water. It isn't just cola's empty calories (about 150 per 12-ounce can) you should worry about. Many of these beverages – especially non-cola drinks and canned ice tea -- harm enamel, the protective shell around teeth.

Drinking carbonated soft drinks regularly can contribute to the erosion of tooth enamel surfaces, according to the Academy of General Dentistry.

Soft drinks and sport beverages which contain sticky sugars that break down into acids, adhere easily to tooth surfaces. These acids can soften tooth substance and promote formation of plaque, which erodes the enamel. Enamel breakdown leads to cavities. If erosion spreads beneath the enamel into the dentin, pain and sensitivity may result, usually a precursor to nerve infection which can result in root canal surgery.

Because saliva helps neutralize acids and wash your teeth clean, the worst time to drink soda pop, ironically, is when you are very thirsty or dehydrated due to low levels of saliva. "The larger the volume of intake, the more impact soda pop has on your teeth," says Dr. Markiewicz. "Diet sodas are part of the problem. People like to drink them throughout the day and between meals because they have no calories, yet the higher frequency and volume is putting their teeth at risk."

Try to drink soda pop or sport beverages only with a full meal, and be sure to brush and floss soon after drinking and/or eating. Also, resolve to quench your thirst with water, a healthier alternative to soft drinks and sports beverages. And if you drink pop alone or between meals, chew sugarless gum afterward to increase your saliva flow.

Fact:

A typical 12-ounce can of regular soda contains approximately 10 teaspoons of sugar.



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