

DON'T TRADE YOUR TEETH FOR EXTRA ENERGY!



BY KATE C. GILSON, DDS



IT IS NO SECRET THAT SOFT DRINKS ARE BAD FOR YOUR TEETH.

However, there are other beverages many don't consider to be in the soda category, that can be equally, or even more, harmful to your teeth. Energy drinks have gained popularity, but are extremely harmful to your teeth. If this is your beverage of choice, make sure you're mindful of how much of these types of drinks you are consuming, or your teeth may suffer.

Like soda, these beverages are typically carbonated. All carbonated beverages contain carbonic acid to create the "bubbles." Unfortunately, this makes drinks more acidic. In addition to sugar, energy drinks also contain citric acid, preservatives and flavoring, which make them more acidic than many soft drinks. When flavors like grapefruit or lemon are added the acidity level can be even more damaging. Over time, exposure to the acid in these drinks will weaken and destroy tooth enamel.

The consumption of energy drinks has skyrocketed and we're noticing the effects of this daily. We're seeing many patients in their teens and twenties with rapid breakdown of their enamel and rampant tooth decay. One common area we notice enamel breakdown from these types of beverages is on the upper front teeth. The reason for this is due to the liquid consistently passing by these teeth while sipping on them. We also notice cavities between the teeth. If you do not have good oral hygiene habits, and are not

flossing nightly, the acid just sits on the surfaces between the teeth and causes the enamel to demineralize. You can reduce your risk of breakdown and decay by having excellent oral hygiene habits, rinsing your mouth with water after drinking an energy drink, and drinking them through a straw. However, the most effective way to reduce tooth damage is to minimize consumption of these types of drinks or eliminate them all together. The absolute worst thing you can do is sip them all day long. This constant acidic exposure accelerates breakdown.

Some initial signs of weakened enamel are chalky white spots appearing on your teeth. This is the first stage of a cavity forming. You may also notice that your teeth are becoming more sensitive particularly to cold, and maybe sweets. If you notice any of these things happening, call your dentist right away. The sooner these issues are addressed the easier they are to repair.

Besides minimizing your consumption of acidic drinks, some things you can do to help repair these weakened areas include using a toothpaste specially formulated to strengthen enamel, with either fluoride or hydroxyapatite, and/or chewing gum containing Xylitol. However, the very best thing you can do for your teeth is just stick to plain old water for your drink of choice. Your teeth and body will thank you!

Dr. Kate Gilson

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