



What's Your Beverage of Choice?

SUBMITTED BY DR. KATE GILSON

IT'S NO SECRET THAT SODA IS BAD FOR YOUR TEETH. As the WDA slogan says, "Sip all day ... get decay!"

However, these days there are several other types of drinks on the market that are just as bad, if not worse, for your teeth than soda. We're noticing a significant increase in decay especially among the teenage population. When we ask them their daily drink of choice, the answer is usually some type of energy drink, sports drink, or a flavored coffee beverage.

The most common drinks of choice by adolescents and young adults are energy drinks. Just like soda, these drinks are very harmful to teeth due to the high-acidity level and amount of sugar they contain. The combo of sugar and acid causes enamel to demineralize, becoming weaker and more susceptible to decay. Due to the high acidity (and extremely high caffeine content), these types of drinks should be consumed very rarely, if at all.

The second most common answer we hear for preferred beverages are the sugary, flavored coffee drinks. Like energy drinks, this popular "accessory" among teens is often sipped on all day, giving teeth a constant acid and sugar bath. It is essentially just a warmer and cozier energy drink, with potentially more sugar, and just as harmful to teeth.

The last type of beverages mentioned are the variety of sports type, electrolyte replacement, drinks that are now available. These

drinks were originally invented as a quick way to replenish electrolytes after a workout, or participating in a sporting event. They were intended to be consumed in a relatively short period of time, not consumed over the entire course of the day. People tend to assume that they're a healthy alternative to water to sip on all day. This not the case when it comes to dental health. Although they may not taste as sweet or sugary as the other drinks, most still contain sugar and are acidic, and therefore, can cause breakdown of enamel. Even the ones that are sugar free are very acidic and can cause breakdown of enamel.

Although water remains the best option for teeth and overall health, we realize that people are going to consume other beverages from time to time. It's the constant daily exposure that's causing many people, especially kids, to have breakdown of their enamel and eventually areas of decay. Each time you take a sip of something acidic, it takes your mouth approximately 20 minutes to return to a normal pH level. Therefore, if you're constantly sipping on something acidic all day long, your oral environment is staying at an acidic level, putting your teeth at risk. The best thing to do is enjoy these drinks in a short period of time and then rinse your mouth with water to get the residual acidity off your teeth as quickly as possible.

Dr. Kate Gilson

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