Acidic food and tooth decay [1]

Dear Alice,

I was told by my dentist that my teeth eroded, due to consumption of too much acidic food. I would like to know what kind of food causes tooth erosion. Do you have a list of these foods?

Thanks,
Shirley

Answer

Dear Shirley,

Dental enamel is the thin, outer layer of hard tissue that helps maintain the tooth’s shape and structure, while defending it from wearing down. Acid is the enemy of tooth enamel. Dental research suggests that people eating and drinking foods with low pH (high acidities) are most apt to develop irreversible tooth erosion. This dental decomposition caused by acid breaks down the tooth structure.

There are many different types of food and drink that are high in acidity and a myriad of acids that can negatively affect your dental health:

- Fruit and fruit products contain citric and malic acids
- Soft drinks contain phosphoric acid
- Fermented products (yogurt) contains lactic acid
- Grapes and wines contain tartaric acid

Even if your teeth are already eroded, there are ways to prevent further breakdown of the dental enamel. Using alkaline (baking soda) or neutral tooth pastes and mouthwashes, chewing sugar-free gums, and finishing a meal with milk or a small piece of cheese can help by increasing salivary flow to wash away and dilute acids on your teeth. You may also apply topical fluoride mouth gels and rinses and fluoride dentifrices, fluoride varnishes, and filled resin bonding agents to ease tooth hypersensitivity and allow for your teeth to rejuvenate by adding back lost minerals.

The key is to keep working and consulting with your dentist to help improve your dental health. This open dialogue and teamwork is imperative to not only preventing further damage, but to hopefully protect them so they may stay healthy for years to come.

Alice!
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