

Everything you need to know about tooth wear

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With the increased amount of video conferencing sessions whilst working at home, we've become more conscious about the state of our teeth when smiling at the camera.



Furthermore, the current COVID-19 situation has given many of us an opportunity to pause and reflect on how our lifestyles impact us, both inside and out.

In this article, we take a closer look at tooth wear to find out why tooth wear can be concerning, what its causes are and how it should be treated.

What is tooth wear?

When the outer tooth surface is lost due to mechanical or chemical activity in the mouth, this is known as tooth wear. It is an increasingly common problem, teeth can simply dissolve away or wear down to varying extents as time passes. This contrasts with gum disease and tooth decay - which are caused by bacteria in the mouth.

Why is tooth wear a growing concern?

In a recent adult dental health survey in the UK, results showed that gum disease and tooth decay appear to be decreasing in society, whilst tooth wear is rising. Over half of the people assessed had some form of tooth wear.

As people live longer and diets change, teeth are being challenged in a myriad of new ways. The diets in our contemporary lives have an impact, as they often contain high levels of acidic food and drink, such as fruit juices and sparkling drinks. Sports drinks have also become more popular and contain high levels of acidic content.

Stressful lifestyles and eating disorders can also increase tooth wear through tooth grinding and stomach acid regurgitation. Increased levels of tooth wear are also seen in those who ingest higher than normal levels of alcohol and those who are particularly into taking social drugs.

What happens as teeth wear?

Everyone experiences some tooth wear simply due to the normal use of their teeth. It only usually becomes a real problem if the level of wear becomes much more significant. Due to one or more of the causes mentioned, teeth can become unattractive, short as well as rough or sensitive. Even chewing or speaking can become a problem, and some people also experience jaw and muscle ache.

What causes tooth wear?

Abrasion: tooth wear can be caused by excessive rubbing away of enamel and dentine as a result of vigorous tooth brushing, a coarse diet, and even porcelain crowns rubbing against natural teeth, as just some examples.

Attrition: contact between the teeth over and above normal use, as seen in patients who generally clench and grind their teeth at night, results in tooth wear, this is often linked to a stressful lifestyle.

Erosion: tooth wear can result from consuming acidic foods and drinks (such as fruits and juices, sparkling drinks, alcohol, sports drinks) or having stomach acid regurgitation (for example due to hiatus hernia, bulimia, pregnancy sickness).

How do you treat tooth wear?

In my practice, we use an evidence-based holistic approach for comprehensive patient care. In this respect, advice may also be sought from dental or medical colleagues in related specialties.

An early diagnosis is important so that simpler treatment, including prevention and monitoring, can be provided wherever possible. Preventative advice is based on three areas: lifestyle, diet and one's oral healthcare regime at home.

On occasion, more complex treatment can be necessary to restore a pleasing appearance and satisfactory function.

Making contact

Please contact [Professor Andrew Eder](#) for more information.