

Beware the Energy Drinks!

Dental decay is caused by dental plaque (a thin film of bacteria on the teeth) converting dietary sugars into plaque acids which attack the teeth. Sports drinks have sugars in them and can contribute to decay.

Dental erosion is a separate problem occurring when acids from the diet or stomach dissolves away tooth substance. Dietary acids are found in citrus fruits or their juices, carbonated beverages, pickled foods and sports drinks.

Some sports drinks used to replace body fluids and minerals lost during exercise have also been shown to be acidic and have a potentially erosive effect on teeth, if used regularly and frequently.

When using sports drinks:

- drink them quickly-avoid sipping them slowly. Don't hold or 'swish' them round your mouth - try to minimise contact with teeth (using a straw will do this);
- try to use them chilled because warmer drinks are more erosive;
- rinse your mouth with water after using these drinks rather than brushing immediately after as this is more likely to wear away the teeth;
- try not to insert a mouth-guard immediately after using sports drinks;
- try to avoid other acidic beverages during the day to reduce the risk of erosion, by drinking water, tea, coffee or milk at other times.

Sports drinks underline the need for all people engaged in training and sports to have regular dental checkups. Also, sports players who do not maintain a good standard of plaque control, with frequent use of fluoride toothpaste, are at greater risk of dental decay since the drinks also contain sugars.

Most recreational sports players in the UK will not need to use sport drinks. It is important to maintain good hydration and with normal exercise of less than 60 minutes this can be achieved by consumption of water before, during and after play. Carbohydrate should then be taken within an hour of completing the sport for maximum benefit. This can be in the form of bread, pasta and fruit NOT SWEETS, BISCUITS AND CHOCOLATE

Dental ABC

Floss

Floss is composed of soft strands of thread, usually made of silk, nylon or gortex which is used to clean and remove plaque and debris from in between the teeth. It is recommended to floss at least one time per day, and preferably after each meal.

To floss your teeth, you need to pull the floss in between two teeth, then curve the floss around one tooth and slide it underneath the gum. Rub the floss against the tooth up and down a few times. Repeat this procedure on the adjacent tooth.

Many patients find flossing very difficult and at this practice we tend to recommend the use of small bottle brushes for all but the tightest spaces between the teeth.

Food Impaction

Food impaction is the forceful wedging of food between the tooth and gum by biting, forces. It often happens in the space between the teeth and is frequently associated with incomplete fillings or very heavily filled teeth. This problem can cause pain and infection of the gums and often leads to tooth decay.

The problem can sometimes be resolved by placing a different shaped filling but often it is necessary to crown the teeth to provide them with adequate support, or build the correct form of the tooth again.

Forceps

Forceps are instruments which have two blades and handles, which are used for holding, compressing, or removing something. Dental forceps are used for the extraction of teeth. The teeth are loosened first with elevators and the forceps are used to hold the tooth to remove it.

Gingivitis

Gingivitis is inflammation of the gums characterized by red, swollen and bleeding gums. It is a reversible condition associated with the build up and accumulation of plaque due to ineffective tooth cleaning. Plaque is an irritant to the gums and causes inflammation. Other factors involved in gingivitis are poorly fitting dentures, malaligned teeth, mouth-breathing and overhanging margins of dental restorations.

We can show patients how to remove the plaque and treat the gingivitis.