

8 FACTS ABOUT YOUR TEETH

1. Millions of people can crack a walnut with their teeth. While most adults exert about 20 to 40 pounds of pressure when their teeth make contact, millions of people exert as much as 250 pounds of pressure on their teeth. These teeth grinders are known as bruxers. Bruxism may be mild and may not require treatment. However, it can be frequent and severe enough to lead to damaged teeth, headaches, jaw disorder and other problems. To prevent damage to the teeth, mouth guards can treat teeth grinding and clenching.
2. Bulimia and acid reflux can destroy tooth enamel. Many people suffering from bulimia are able to hide the disorder, but it is difficult to keep it a secret from a dentist. And acid reflux, can cause tooth and gum erosion.
3. Swimming in overly chlorinated pools can wear away enamel. Fluoride treatments can be given to help keep the teeth strong. Swimming with a well-adapted and custom-fitted mouth guard, which can minimize exposure of teeth to chlorine, also helps.
4. Soda and citrus drinks can be caustic to tooth enamel. The average American drinks more than 53 gallons of soft drinks each year, more than any other beverage, including milk, beer, coffee, or water. Phosphoric acid in soda and citric acid in citrus drinks can cause tooth enamel corrosion and the sugar can cause cavities.
5. Most people don't know they have bad breath. Dr. Neal suggests this bad breath test: Using dental floss or a tongue scraper, sniff either the floss or the scraper. If your mouth is clean, you won't have a telltale smell.
6. Infection and trauma can cause tooth enamel defects. Nutritional deficiencies during infancy, antibiotic use such as tetracycline, high fever, and trauma can all lead to tooth enamel irregularities such as pitting.
7. Eighty percent of Americans over 35 have gum disease. It can range from simple gum inflammation, called gingivitis, to serious disease that results in damage to the bone. In gingivitis, the gums become red and swollen. Gums can bleed easily. Untreated gingivitis can lead to periodontitis, in which the gums pull away from the teeth and form pockets of infection. If ignored, the bones, gums and connective tissue supporting the teeth are destroyed.
8. One in four adults over 60 has lost all of his or her teeth. A good oral hygiene program should include twice daily brushing, flossing, eating a balanced diet, limiting between-meal snacks, and regular visits to your dentist for professional cleaning and oral exams. Treatment for these oral healthcare problems can range from simple cosmetic services such as teeth-whitening to extensive full-mouth reconstruction. But remember that an ounce of prevention is definitely worth a pound of cure.

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