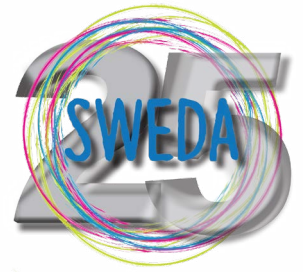


EATING DISORDERS AND YOUR TEETH



Some effects of eating disorders can be harmful to teeth, gums and lips.

- * Binge eating, especially of sugary foods and drinks, can increase the risk of tooth decay.
- * Vomiting causes stomach acid to wash over the teeth, this is strong enough to destroy the enamel surface. Known as erosion, this happens as a result of repeated vomiting.

Other consequences of eating disorders may include:

- * Dry mouth - This can happen when taking some medications, such as antidepressants. Saliva neutralises acids in the mouth so without it the possibility of decay is increased. A dry mouth can also have an effect on taste and chewing food. Infections and mouth ulcers can also occur.
- * Purging can lead to redness, scratches and cuts inside the mouth, especially on the upper surface commonly referred to as the 'soft palate.'
- * Eating hot or cold food or drink may become uncomfortable. Tissue loss and erosive lesions on the surface of the mouth may occur. The edges of teeth often become thin and break off easily.
- * Gums - Gingivitis, or inflammation of the gums, can develop and gums may bleed on brushing. Gums can also recede causing sensitivity and possible susceptibility to decay.
- * Lips - Cracking and splitting can happen, the corners of the mouth can also be affected.

Signs of Erosion

Teeth may:

- * Look worn.
- * Change in appearance or colour.
- * Feel sensitive.

Signs of Decay

- * Toothache - either continuous pain or occasional sharp pain.
- * Discoloured teeth - grey brown or black spots on the teeth.
- * Bad breath.
- * An unpleasant taste in your mouth.

Somerset Dental Advice Line

If you live in Somerset and need information on where to find a dentist then phone the **Somerset Health Authority Dental helpline** on **0300 123 7691** or email at dentist4u@sompar.nhs.uk

Self Help

- * Avoid brushing immediately after vomiting, as stomach acid softens the enamel.
- * Rinse out with water instead.
- * Try to maintain twice daily brushing.
- * Use a fluoride mouthwash.
- * Use a good lip moisturiser and keep the corners of the mouth clean.
- * Try to drink milk or water rather than sugary or acidic drinks.

Regular check-ups can help reduce damage.