



Everything can be bad for you but how can you make sure your teeth last a lifetime?  
If you drink, smoke, take drugs or have oral sex you may want to take notice.



## Alcohol

The main threats to your mouth are sugar and acids. Most alcoholic drinks contain sugar which along with your mouth bacteria can lead to tooth decay. Arriving home drunk can mean forgetting to brush your teeth and therefore allowing the bacteria to have a party in your mouth leading to cavities. A lot of alcoholic drinks, especially ones with carbonated mixers are very acidic and can dissolve your tooth enamel leading to sensitive teeth and making them more vulnerable to decay. Vomiting can also bring stomach acid into your mouth leading to the enamel being dissolved.

What can I do?

- Swish your mouth with water between alcoholic drinks.
- Chew sugar-free gum on your way home to help increase salivary flow to neutralise the acid and wash away the sugars.
- Leave your toothbrush on your pillow before you go out so you don't forget to brush!



## DIY tooth whitening kits

You need to be careful of the source of the whitening kits; some of which are not CE approved and contain acidic or high concentrations of peroxide. In the EU you can only buy up to 0.1% peroxide over the counter and up to 6% peroxide from your dental practice. Concentrations above this can cause permanent damage to your teeth and lead to chronic sensitivity.

What can I do?

- Only buy CE approved kits
- The fastest and safest whitening is from your dentist



## Toothpastes

Not all toothpastes are created equal. Many types of toothpaste are highly abrasive and actually strip away tooth enamel which never grows back. The teeth then become sensitive when tooth enamel is worn away. Any toothpaste with a value over 100 RDA (relative dentine abrasivity) is considered to be abrasive.

What can I do?

- Avoid smokers toothpaste
- Use a toothpaste that is minimally abrasive, such as Sensodyne or Colgate total.



## Mouthguards

Do you play a sport that involves physical contact or moving objects? Ever been knocked in the face and it hurt? Well you are lucky you did not get a tooth knocked out. The American Dental Association showed that mouthguards prevent approximately 200,000 injuries each year in school football alone. A shop or internet bought generic mouthguard can provide some protection, but they tend to be bulky and interfere with talking and breathing.

What can I do?

- Get a custom made one from your dentist to offer maximum protection and comfort so you can concentrate fully on the game.



## Hard foods

Icecubes and hard sweets can crack your teeth. You usually hear a cracking sound and then experience sharp pain.

What can I do?

- Suck sweets and if you must chew on ice, use the crushed variety.



## Eating disorders

Certain eating disorders may include frequent vomiting but even nutritional deficiencies can affect the health of your mouth. Often the first sign is sensitive teeth and bleeding gums. This then progresses to thin, sharp teeth that look grey and worn. It is important to get help early.

What can I do?

- Never brush straight after acid reflux or vomiting. Rinse with water for 30 seconds first.
- It is important to have good daily oral hygiene using a fluoride toothpaste.
- See your dentist regularly



## Lip & tongue piercing

They may look cool and sexy originally but what damage can studs do in your mouth? As your tongue is constantly moving the piercing can chip neighbouring teeth and cause gum swelling.

What can I do?

- If you do have a lip or tongue piecing get it checked regularly at your dentist. They can monitor the signs of infection and treat it.



## Teeth as bottle openers

Enamel is the hardest substance in your body but no match for a beer bottle! Teeth are incredibly brittle from certain angles. Open packets, chewing your nails and tearing sellotape are classic causes of chipped teeth.

What can I do?

- Use a bottle opener or scissors.



## Sport and fizzy drinks

They contain a large amount of sugar and acids that can dissolve your teeth. The sugar free ones are almost as bad, containing loads of acid. After that sip it takes your mouth 20 minutes to neutralise this acid.

What can I do?

- Reduce the number of drinks you take and if you can, drink through a straw to avoid your teeth.
- Do not brush straight after a drink; if you need to, swill with water for 20 seconds first or use sugar free gum after.
- Try and limit drinks to mealtimes so the food can help neutralise the acid



## Smoking

Smoking can disguise the warning signs of gum disease. Smokers mouths have a reduced blood supply so gum disease can progress silently, often the first sign is when the teeth start to become loose. Normally gums bleed when there is gum disease but in smokers this sign is hidden until it is too late.

What can I do?

- See your dentist to look for the early warning signs.
- Brushing twice a day can help reduce the progression of gum disease.
- Contact the smoking helpline on 0800 022 4 332



## Drugs

Not only illegal drugs can damage your mouth. Some medications are acidic and can help dissolve your teeth. Especially chewable vitamin tablets, Aspirin and asthma medications and syrups may cause tooth damage. Some medication can dry out your mouth, making it more susceptible to infection and decay.

Cannabis - can cause dry mouth and the smoke can cause oral cancer.

Cocaine - by rubbing it into your gums it causes ulceration of the gum and exposes the bone. Cocaine also makes you grind your teeth often leading to worn teeth and sore jaw muscles.

Ecstasy - side effects include dry mouth and jaw grinding.

Heroin - users often crave sweet foods and again dry mouth and jaw grinding.

Methamphetamine – causes a massive amount of tooth decay in a short time as it is so acidic. Users often crave sugary foods and drinks, clench their teeth, and have dry mouth.

What can I do?

- Use sugar-free gum to increase salivary flow
- Never rub drugs onto your gums- it causes ulcers and the gums to shrink
- Speak to your GP about the side effects of any medication
- Contact your nearest drug support service



## Oral Sex

It can help transmission of Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) which can lead to oral cancer. Both men and woman can be carriers of the virus and it is transmitted via genital or oral sex. HPV infection can go undetected for years. HPV can cause cervical cancer in woman but oral cancer in men or women.

What can I do?

- There is a vaccine that protects you against the main strains of HPV.
- See your dentist if you notice anything unusual in your mouth that has been present for more than 2 weeks.

Mention this oral survival guide and get 20% off a full mouth comprehensive examination.