

Acids can also come from internal sources. Any condition where vomiting or gastric reflux occurs frequently - such as bulimia, nausea from pregnancy or nausea from drinking/drugs - can cause rapid and severe erosion of tooth enamel.

- After an episode of vomiting or after consuming acidic foods or drinks, the surface of the teeth may be 'soft' for a period of time. The teeth should NOT be brushed immediately. Instead, chew sugarless gum to stimulate the flow of saliva. Alternately, the mouth can be rinsed with water to help neutralise the acid. Wait 30 minutes then brush with a fluoride toothpaste.
- If any condition is causing vomiting on a regular basis, of course, you should consult a doctor. As well, a dental professional should be consulted to advise and assist with measures that will prevent severe damage to the teeth.
- You do not need to eliminate ALL the foods and drinks that can have a bad effect on teeth. If tooth decay or erosion of enamel is a problem for you, even small changes that substitute some more 'tooth friendly' choices each day can help. See our brochure on Acid Erosion for more information.

#### **Gum Disease**

Early signs of gum disease - bleeding gums when brushing or red and puffy gums - may arise if daily tooth brushing routines slip. Changing hormones, such as during puberty or pregnancy, can increase the likelihood that gum problems can develop. Our brochure entitled "Gum Disease and you teeth" can give you more information on this.



*Creating Smiles with Care*

## **Oral Health For Young Adults**



**216 Bazaar St, Maryborough**

**Tel: 07 4121 3726**

**[www.toothworkx.com.au](http://www.toothworkx.com.au)**

As a teenager or young adult your life is full of changes and new challenges. Many of these changes in lifestyle and new choices that are made can have long term effects on the mouth and teeth. Some of the more specific conditions that are known to affect young adults in particular are:

- More tooth decay (white spot lesions)
- Bad Breath
- Lifestyle choices
- Changing diet and eating patterns
- Acids

### Decay/White spot lesions

It is thought that the many changes in the lives of young adults may result in less frequent tooth brushing, new eating patterns and less regular dental check-ups - changes that can increase the risk of tooth decay

- Fluoride is needed DAILY throughout life to protect teeth against decay
- Fluoride is most easily applied DAILY through brushing with fluoride toothpaste and drinking fluoridated water
- Brushing twice a day with fluoride toothpaste reduces the risk of tooth decay much more than brushing only once a day
- The most important time to apply some fluoride is before bedtime as the flow of saliva (which protects teeth against decay) is lowest during sleep
- Use floss to remove plaque between teeth
- Have regular dental check-ups
- Don't share toothbrushes - bacteria that cause tooth decay can be spread from person to person!

White spot lesions can be the first sign that we see of tooth decay as it is the first indicator that protective minerals have been lost from the surface of the teeth. At this stage, the decay process is reversible but it is important to catch it in its early stages. Look in your mouth regularly for early signs of tooth decay and other problems. Gently lift your upper lip and look for white spots near the gumline. If you see white spots (or dark spots) near the gumline, seek advice from a dental professional. Keep in mind that signs of tooth decay are not always visible. Often tooth decay starts between teeth. Dental professionals have the equipment and training necessary to thoroughly examine your mouth for decay and other problems. So visit your dental professional for regular examinations.

*Photo courtesy of Prof John McIntyre,  
University of Adelaide*



*White spots near gumline may indicate early decay*

*Xrays may be needed to see decay between teeth*

### Bad Breath

Bad breath can have many causes such as smoking, gum disease, foods and drinks, or gastric reflux. Thorough daily cleaning, including brushing the tongue, is the best defence against bad breath. Do not use sugary mints or sugary gum to freshen your breath as these can cause tooth decay if used frequently. If bad breath persists, a dental professional can help you identify the cause and find solutions. Rinses and gum are not substitutes for daily brushing and flossing!

### Lifestyle Choices

Young adults may start smoking, drinking alcohol, increase intake of caffeine by drinking coffee, tea, or energy drinks or try recreational drugs. All these habits can affect the mouth. Oral problems linked with these habits include staining of teeth, reduced saliva, gum disease and oral cancer.

### Changing diets and eating patterns

It's easy to fall into the habit of 'Eating on the go' and snacking frequently can become common for young adults. Teeth can be affected by these eating patterns as well as by the types of foods and drinks that are consumed.



Acidic foods and drinks can 'erode' enamel from teeth if consumed too frequently or sipped over a long period of time and held in the mouth. Acidic drinks include soft drinks (diet and regular), wine, cordials, fruit juices, fruit drinks and sports drinks. Acidity can also be a problem with some foods that are considered 'healthy', such as citrus fruits or salad dressings made of vinegar, if such foods are consumed too frequently.