



Vanishing teeth - acid alert

Today's diet and lifestyle are putting our teeth at risk

What is dental erosion?

- Erosion is the progressive loss of tooth enamel caused by acid not by bacteria.
- Lifestyle and frequent contact with acid from drinks, food and some medications can dissolve tooth surfaces causing tooth wear.
- Tooth wear can be unsightly, often painful and the damage can be costly and difficult to repair.
- Saliva, nature's mouth wash, protects teeth from acids.
- If a person has no or hardly any saliva (dry mouth), then they are more at risk of dental erosion and tooth decay.



What causes dental erosion?

Foods

- Tart and tangy foods such as pickles, citrus fruit and vinegar are acidic (low pH).

Drinks

- Soft drinks, fruit juices, sports, energy drinks, wine and pre-mixed alcohol drinks are acidic.
- Acidic drinks consumed more than 4-6 times a week put teeth at risk.
- Drinks containing caffeine (e.g. colas and energy drinks) and/or alcohol also increase the risk of dry mouth.

Lifestyle

Playing sport, exercising or working in a hot or dry environment can cause a dry mouth. So can smoking, recreational drugs and alcohol. Quenching thirst often with an acidic drink when dehydrated can lead to tooth erosion. Water is best.

Medical conditions

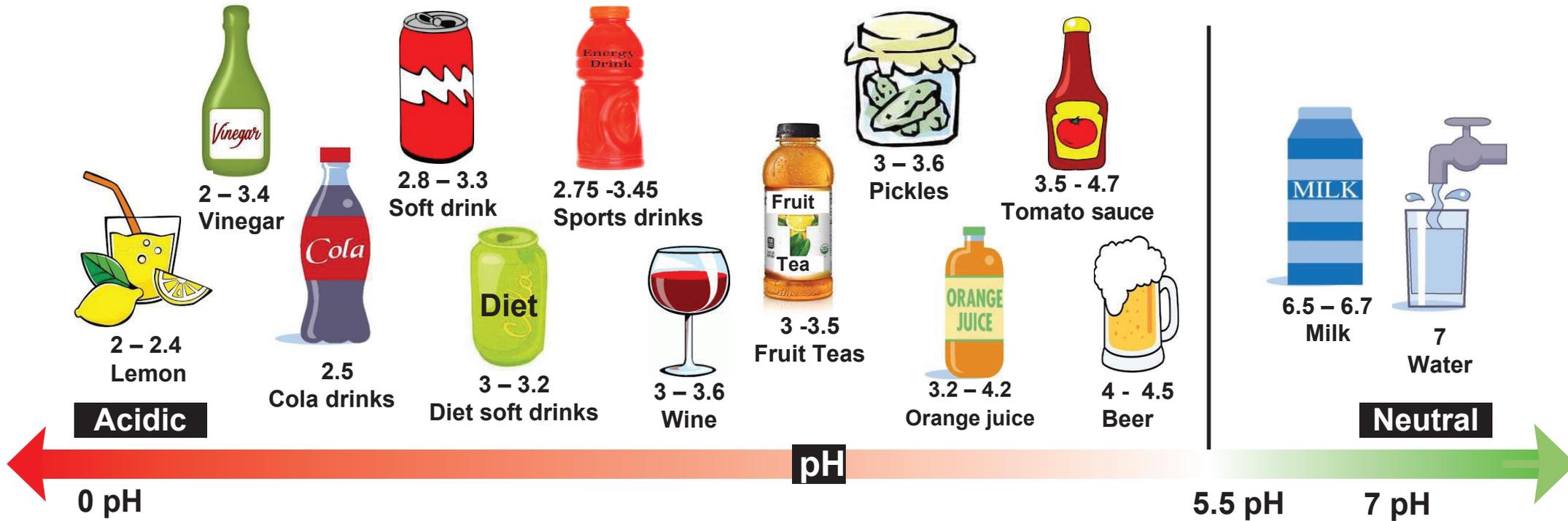
Vomiting and/or digestive disorders e.g. gastric reflux can cause erosion. This includes morning sickness, eating disorders, chronic alcoholism, binge drinking and dry mouth.

Medicines and supplements

Some acidic medications and supplements may increase risk of erosion via direct contact with the teeth e.g. asthma sprays and chewing vitamin C.

Also, some medications cause dry mouth.

Many of the foods and drinks we enjoy are highly acidic. Acid can soften and erode tooth enamel especially if it is in the mouth **often** and allowed to **linger**. Don't let YOUR teeth wear away!



Stop tooth erosion by...

- ✓ Drinking tap water.
- ✓ Limiting acidic drinks/ foods and keep them to meal times.
- ✓ Drinking through a straw and not 'swishing' around the mouth.
- ✓ Drinking plain milk or eating cheese to neutralise acid.
- ✓ Rinsing with water or drinking plain milk after anything acidic e.g. asthma inhalers.
- ✓ Chewing sugar-free gum stimulates saliva, protecting teeth.
- ✓ Avoiding toothbrushing for at least 30 minutes after vomiting or having acidic food or drinks as the teeth can wear easily. Instead, smear fluoride toothpaste on your teeth to freshen your mouth and help strengthen tooth enamel.

pH is a measure of the acidity of a product. When the pH goes below **5.5** tooth enamel can begin to dissolve

For further information please discuss with your dental practitioner

Would you like more information or to provide feedback?

This document can be made available in alternative formats such as braille, audio tape or electronically on request.



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