

Root beer may be 'safest' soft drink for teeth

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Exposing teeth to soft drinks, even for a short period of time, causes dental erosion—and prolonged exposure can lead to significant enamel loss. Root beer products, however, are non-carbonated and do not contain the acids that harm teeth, according to a study in the March/April 2007 issue of *General Dentistry*, the AGD's clinical, peer-reviewed journal. That might be something to consider during the next visit to the grocery store.

Consumers often consider soft drinks to be harmless, believing that the only concern is sugar content. Most choose to consume "diet" drinks to alleviate this concern. However, diet drinks contain phosphoric acid and/or citric acid and still cause dental erosion—though considerably less than their sugared counterparts.

"Drinking any type of soft drink poses risk to the health of your teeth," says AGD spokesperson Kenton Ross, DMD, FAGD. Dr. Ross recommends that patients consume fewer soft drinks by limiting their intake to meals. He also advises patients to drink with a straw, which will reduce soda's contact with teeth.

"My patients are shocked to hear that many of the soft drinks they consume battery acid," Dr. Ross explains. For example, one type of cola ranked 2.39 on the acid scale, compared to battery acid which is 1.0.

Researchers concluded that non-colas cause a greater amount of erosion than colas. Citric acid is the predominant acid in non-cola drinks and is a

major factor in why non-cola drinks are especially erosive. There is a significant difference between sugared and diet colas.

"The bottom line," Dr. Ross stresses, "is that the acidity in all soft drinks is enough to damage your teeth and should be avoided."

What is dental erosion?

- Dental erosion involves loss of tooth structure
- Erosion refers to the action of the acid on the entire surface of the tooth
- Dental erosion and dental cavities are not exactly the same. Cavities and tooth decay tend to be isolated to cavity-prone areas such as in between teeth and in pits and grooves

Source: Academy of General Dentistry

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