

TRICLINIC

YOUR MULTISPORT QUESTIONS ANSWERED BY OUR TEAM OF EXPERTS

MEET OUR EXPERTS

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ENAMEL ENIGMA

Q I've been to the dentist recently and it seems that I have badly worn enamel on my teeth. I've heard that this might have something to do with the chlorine from swimming in a pool regularly. Can you confirm this?

JOHN COATES, EMAIL

A In my clinic one of the more common causes of toothwear I see is that caused by abrasive foods in a 'healthy' diet and over-brushing, which can cause teeth to simply wear away. An increasing problem is seen in athletes who regularly sip sparkling sports drinks, and also

in swimmers where repeated contact with chlorinated water that has become acidic can be a major problem.

How does that work? Well, swimming pools are disinfected by chlorine gas dissolved in the water. However, hydrochloric acid may be produced as an unwanted by-product. This causes the pH value to drop below the critical level of about pH5 where swimmers can suffer from acid erosion when tooth enamel may dissolve, leaving the teeth more sensitive than normal.

Excess swimming pool acidity is normally neutralized by the addition of sodium carbonate. However, you do need regular and prolonged exposure to see any evidence of tooth erosion. If you're starting to see evidence

that the enamel is wearing, ensure you make lifestyle choices to prevent further damage. For example, try wearing a mouthguard while swimming to stop as much water contacting your teeth. Ensure you don't brush your teeth for an hour after swimming, don't over-brush, and use a daily fluoride toothpaste and

mouthrinse. Try to avoid eating very acidic types of fruit and cut down on fizzy drinks. This should keep further toothwear at bay. However, if you're still noticing visible changes or feeling that your teeth are becoming more and more sensitive, it's important to go and see your dentist to discuss treatment. **AE**

Acid attack: too much pool swimming could be damaging your teeth!

