

Our lifestyle (even our good habits!) is beginning to bite back, says Professor Andrew Eder

A brush with tooth trouble

TOOOTH SURFACE LOSS is the latest challenge to oral health. More than 50 per cent of children and pretty well all adults show signs of tooth surface loss. From as young as we can remember, we are all told to brush our teeth to stop them becoming decayed and to prevent gum problems. As a positive result of these ingrained habits and also through the addition of fluoride to toothpaste and drinking water, we are keeping our teeth longer. However, wear and tear is instead becoming a significant problem.

Many of us subconsciously grind our teeth, normally at night, often by way of stress relief, so wearing away the enamel surface. Abrasive foods in a "healthy" diet and over-brushing can also cause teeth to wear away. And very much on the increase is erosion of the outer tooth surfaces from acidic foods and drinks or even stomach acid regurgitation. It is often hard to arrive at an absolute diagnosis and it is normally a combination of the above.

As co-editor of the authoritative textbook on tooth surface loss and clinical director of the London Tooth Wear Centre, Professor Andrew Eder is an international opinion leader in this



Professor Eder goes beyond the surface of tooth damage

growing area. He has a special interest in clinical aspects of the causes and patterns of tooth surface loss, as well as the aesthetic and functional management of patients with tooth wear.

Professor Eder says "Our patients are generally self-referred or advised to come and see us by their doctor or dentist, normally complaining of sharp and sensitive teeth which may look

shorter on smiling or just speaking. Patients often also report that chewing may have become a problem." He likes to work closely with the patient's general dental practitioner and believes strongly that it is the local dentist who plays a key role in early diagnosis, together with dietary and social advice to help limit the problem moving forward.

"Critical to success is identification of the cause of the tooth wear at the outset," Professor Eder confirms "otherwise the more comprehensive treatment is likely to fail." For example, patients who present with regular stomach acid regurgitation should be referred for medical investigation and management, while those drinking lots of fruit juice and sparkling drinks

may simply be advised to reduce or modify their pattern of intake. Social drug abuse is also highlighted as a cause of tooth wear, as prolonged periods of grinding and clenching go hand-in-hand with this craving.

Professor Eder adds: "Prolonged periods of intentional vomiting are not only seen in the most unfortunate of anorexics and bulimics, but also in those who simply wish to keep a trim figure for professional purposes such as acting or dancing. An increasing problem is also seen in athletes who regularly sip sparkling sports drinks and also regular swimmers where repeated contact with acidic chlorine in the water can be a problem. Such sports-related issues will be more widely reported as we approach the London Olympics in 2012."

Professor Eder is director of education at the UCL Eastman Dental Institute and is responsible for postgraduate training and continuing education for dentists nationally. He is associate dean for continuing education at UCL School of Life and Medical Sciences. As a consultant and specialist in restorative dentistry and prosthodontics, he also maintains a specialist private practice in London. www.restorative-dentistry.co.uk info@restorative-dentistry.co.uk 020 7486 7180



The best varifocal lens system available today

Giving 5 times more precision and sharper, more comfortable vision due to the unique measuring and personalisation system.

The Eyecode Lens System: exclusively from Observatory the Opticians – Varifocal Experts.

See the difference.

- 5 x more precision
- Sharper vision in all directions of gaze
- Money Back Guarantee
- Exclusive to Wardale Williams

OBSERVATORY
THE OPTICIANS

INDEPENDENT • EXPERIENCED • PROFESSIONAL

Varifocal
Experts

64 MUSWELL HILL LONDON N10 3RT 020 8444 0143
WWW.OBSERVATORY.CO.UK

Dentists' news, by Sharron Livingston

Reasons to smile

IF YOUR teeth are crowded or discoloured, you may be reluctant to smile. According to Dr Leon Rom, founder of 321 Dental (www.321dental.co.uk) "even the most subtle changes can make a big difference to a smile and confidence. For instance, changing silver fillings to white fillings goes some way to brighten up a smile." Chipped teeth can be reshaped by using a composite bonding of white filling to change the teeth and the smile.

The thought of fillings may not raise a smile either. But Douglas Miller (www.douglasmiller.co.uk), whose practice is in North Finchley, has good news. "It is possible for some fillings to be done with little or no drilling by using a Carisolv, a gel developed in Sweden. It is able to dissolve away tooth decay and is perfect for child patients, nervous patients and those who dislike the noise or vibrations of the slow drill."

At Cavendish House (www.cavendishdental.co.uk) in East Finchley, Kevin Silver says that whitening can now be done at home. "We take impressions and a custom tray is made (a thin gum shield). We give the patient the bleach and the tray with instructions and they can bleach the teeth at night when asleep or during the day when they have a quiet hour or two. Typically seven to 14 sessions later, the teeth are significantly lighter." For the impatient, the alternative is in-surgery bleaching with a high-powered halogen light. It takes around one and a half hours.

According to Douglas Miller, even a single tooth that has darkened, possibly following root treatment, can be whitened, but this time from the inside. "We drill the back of the tooth, insert the whitening materials and then we seal the tooth. It all adds up to a more youthful appearance".

If the teeth are quite crooked or crowded, train-track braces can be used to straighten them. But if the Ugly Betty look is not for you, this can also be achieved with white ceramic brackets, which are more inconspicuous.

Where overcrowding is mild, the most inconspicuous teeth straightening system available is Invisalign. "These are very thin trays that clip on to the teeth and almost invisible and comfortable to wear. You can take the trays out to clean your teeth. Some people even put the bleach in the trays to whiten and straighten the teeth at the same time," says Kevin.

Crowns can be used when a tooth has a large filling. It entails a lot of drilling, but changes the colour, shape and position of the teeth. But don't despair if you have a missing tooth. Douglas Miller suggests an implant treatment. Implants are artificial tooth roots made of pure titanium. "For people with missing teeth, implants can be a very effective way of avoiding removable false teeth." Another strategy is the use of veneers. These are a thin laminate of porcelain, on the front of the teeth, to change the colour and the shape and disguise mild crowding.