



Tooth Wear

Tooth wear can occur when there is mechanical (**grinding**) or chemical (**acidic**) damage to the tooth's enamel surface.

ACIDIC CAUSES:

The acid from various foods, candies, drinks (soda, coffee, sport drink, flavored water, seltzer/carbonated water), or gastric reflux softens the enamel. This softer enamel can then be worn away by grinding, chewing, and tooth brushing. The thinning of the enamel can expose the underlying dentin and cause tooth sensitivity or even expose the tooth's nerve.

Gastroesophageal Reflux Disorder, **GERD**, is recurrent regurgitation of the acidic gastric contents (pH 1-2) that may cause damage to the esophagus and oral cavity. If the tooth erosion is severe, we recommend ruling out GERD as a possible cause by consulting your child's PCP or GI specialist. If untreated, GERD can predispose to throat and dental concerns.

Systemic Symptoms of GERD:

- Heartburn
- Sore throat
- Feeling of lump in throat and/or clearing throat frequently
- Difficulty and/or pain with swallowing
- Burping/belching
- Chronic cough
- Hoarse voice
- Recurrent asthma, bronchitis, aspiration pneumonia, sinusitis, ear infections

Oral Signs/Symptoms of GERD:

- Tooth Erosion
- Bad breath
- Oral burning sensations
- Mouth ulceration
- Sour taste

To minimize the effects of acid erosion:

- Decrease your exposure to acidic drinks, foods, and candy.
- Use a straw when consuming acidic beverages.
- Rinse out mouth with water after drinking acidic beverages.
- Wait at least 30 minutes before brushing teeth after consuming acidic foods and drinks.
 - Acid temporarily softens the enamel. Waiting to brush gives time for the pH of the mouth to increase and limits damage from brushing the softer enamel.
- Use of an additional fluoride rinse or prescription fluoride toothpaste can help to reverse the enamel softening.
- Your doctor may prescribe a medication (ex: acid blocker, acid neutralizer, anxiety medication)



Grinding (Bruxism):

Grinding in kids is common and can be related to typical neurological and dental development. In general, you can expect some bruxism in children, which usually lessens around 9-10 years of age. Often there are NO symptoms from bruxism in children. Parents complain about the sound, but children typically have no complaints.

Symptoms of bruxism can include:

- Tooth wear
- Jaw muscle pain/fatigue - more common in the morning
- Morning headaches

There are cases where bruxism can be a sign of an underlying systemic condition, such as anxiety, stress, gastroesophageal reflux, and sleep disorders.

There is an increased prevalence of grinding at night with sleep disorders such as obstructive sleep apnea.

Signs/Symptoms of Poor Sleep / Obstructive Sleep Apnea:

- Snoring
- Restless sleeping, atypical body and head position on bed
- Daytime sleepiness
- Poor school performance
- Bedwetting in toilet trained children
- Irritability and/or aggressiveness
- Children presenting with typical symptoms of ADHD/hyperactivity

It is important to talk with your pediatrician about any concerns with your child's sleep and/or daytime behavior. Children may need a sleep study or an airway evaluation by an ENT specialist.