



EATING DISORDERS COUNSELLING AND SUPPORT SERVICE

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BULIMIA AND YOUR TEETH

Dental Problems

Stomach acid washing over the teeth (as a result of frequent vomiting) wears away the enamel layer. The pulp nerve ending may eventually be exposed and the teeth then have to be crowned. Dentists are often the first to question sufferers on their eating habits.

Unfortunately, much of the salvage work undertaken to preserve a sufferer's teeth will be undone unless he/she stops using self-induced vomiting as a method of weight control.

Care of your teeth

Many sufferers make the mistake of scrubbing their teeth straight after being sick. This in fact damages the surface crystals on the enamel layer of the teeth. Dentists who specialise in problems related to enamel erosion advise that, after being sick, you rinse your mouth out thoroughly with water, and then wait several hours before having anything acidic, such as fruit or fizzy drinks, and especially before brushing teeth. This treatment allows the saliva to have a neutralising effect on the stomach acid which seeps into the surface enamel after vomiting. If you clean your teeth whilst they are in this sensitive state, abrasive properties in toothpaste etch the enamel still further, so that over the years it is progressively worn away.

If you feel compelled to brush your teeth after being sick, avoid using toothpaste, particularly 'smokers' toothpaste. Just use a brush dipped in water.

Recent research shows that you can minimise the detrimental effects of acidity on dental enamel by eating cheese or drinking milk, but obviously, if these foods propel you into a panic binge, then just settle for rinsing your mouth with water.

It is a good idea to tell your dentist about your eating problem. It saves having to invent stories to account the deterioration or fragile state of your teeth.

Go for regular check-ups at least every six months, and more often if your gums bleed a lot. This is particularly important if you have a high frequency of bingeing and vomiting.

Taken from "Coping with Bulimia" by Barbara French published by Harper Collins.

"CARALINE" CENTRE FOR EATING DISORDERS THERAPY & EDUCATION

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