

Seek dental care

If you are suffering from an eating disorder, it's important to seek regular dental check-ups.

Most people find it hard to tell their dentist about their purging behaviour.

Remember that your dentist is there to help you with your teeth. They are not there to judge you.

Your dentist will be able to provide you with the best dental advice when they have a complete and accurate picture of all factors affecting your teeth.

Remember that if your dental health is left unchecked, it will continue to deteriorate.

If you are in this situation we're here to help—not judge. We want to make sure you have the best chance at keeping healthy. If you have any questions please call the studio.



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Acids and your teeth

Eating disorders and reflux hurt more than you think



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Frequent exposure to acids in the mouth can result in unintended consequences



Purging and your teeth

Gastric reflux or regular vomiting (also referred to as *purging*) can cause both short-term and long-term damage to your smile and dental health. If you have an eating disorder, it's important that you understand the consequences of frequent purging and what you can do to minimise dental damage.

What happens to your mouth when you purge?

When you purge, the gastric acid from your stomach enters your mouth. Through frequent exposure to this acid, the mouth's defence system becomes impaired and unable to protect the tooth enamel (the hard protective layer of your teeth), leading to its loss or decay.

Unfortunately, teeth enamel does not grow back, and so the strength and appearance of teeth become damaged.



Consequences of frequent purging or untreated gastric reflux

Dental damage can include:

- > Chemical erosion of tooth enamel. This can be so severe that the teeth have to be replaced entirely, or require full rehabilitation with resins or crowns. This is very complex and expensive treatment.
- > Temperature hypersensitivity; increased sensitivity to hot and cold foods.
- > Enlargement of salivary glands; these can swell up, leading to what is known as 'chipmunk cheeks'.
- > Altered appearance of teeth; when the white enamel is lost, teeth are left looking thin, yellow, translucent, chipped, and uneven. Tooth whitening cannot fix this.
- > Without the protection of hard enamel, teeth become very brittle and prone to cracking or breaking.
- > Loss of tooth height which is very 'ageing' to the appearance of your smile.



Minimising damage

If you are suffering from an eating disorder, gastric reflux and/or vomit regularly, the following guidelines have been developed to help minimise the damage to your teeth:

- > Do not brush your teeth immediately after vomiting. Enamel is softened for 30 minutes after an acid attack. Brushing them during this time will cause further abrasion of the teeth, making them sensitive and leading to increased discolouration.
- > Instead, rinse your mouth with water or a mixture of baking soda & water. Baking soda can help to neutralise the acid in your mouth.
- > Use a high-fluoride toothpaste or a fluoride mouth-rinse (available from the pharmacy). Fluoride provides protection from decay and reduces sensitivity. It also helps to reduce the rate of acid wear. General mouth rinses will provide no benefit.
- > Floss and brush teeth twice daily to remove plaque and control decay.
- > Stay hydrated with lots of water to maintain good saliva levels.

