



Vomiting and Dental Care

Vomiting is a one of the key features of Bulimia Nervosa and is often seen in other types of eating disorders. Frequent vomiting has a significant effect on dental health, and may eventually lead to gum disease, enamel erosion, and loss of teeth. The consequences of frequent or regular vomiting have both short term and long term effects, so if you have an eating disorder it can be helpful to learn firstly, the consequences of vomiting, and secondly, how to minimise dental damage.

Vomiting requires the gastric acid from a person's stomach to enter into their mouth. Gastric acid, being strong enough to erode the paint off a car, does untold damage to the enamel on our teeth. Enamel is designed to protect our teeth, so when that is eroded, our teeth are then exposed and vulnerable to damage. Unfortunately, it can take only as little as six months for permanent damage to take place.

So what are some of the consequences of frequent vomiting?

- Thermal sensitivity – you may notice an increased sensitivity to hot or cold foods
- Enamel erosion – the hard covering on your teeth wear down, which over time may lead to the necessary wearing of crowns and other expensive dental 'fixing,' or even the replacing of teeth
- Brittle and translucent teeth, appearing in a greyish colour
- Swollen salivary glands, inducing a 'chipmunk look'

What can you do to minimise the damage?

- Do NOT brush your teeth immediately after purging. This will merely embed the gastric acids more deeply in your teeth and gums, leading to further enamel erosion and other problems.
- Rinse your mouth out with water and baking soda, as the baking soda will help to neutralise the acidity. If you cannot access baking soda then rinsing your mouth out with just water is a preferred method to brushing teeth.
- Use a fluoride toothpaste to reduce the level of tooth decay and tooth sensitivity.
- Floss and brush daily to remove plaque.
- Have regular dental check-ups. While this may be difficult for you, it would be helpful to confide in your dentist about frequent vomiting as your dental practitioner will be able to provide you with the best dental advice once they have the full details of your dental profile.