

What is Tooth Enamel?

Enamel is the thin outer covering of the tooth. This tough shell is the hardest tissue in the human body. Enamel covers the crown or the part of the tooth that is visible.

Because enamel is translucent, you can see light through it. But the main body of the tooth, the dentin, is the part that is responsible for your tooth color.

Sometimes coffee, tea, cola, red wine, fruit juices and cigarettes stain the enamel on your teeth. Regular visits to your dentist for routine cleaning and polishing can help remove most surface stains and make sure your teeth stay healthy.

What does tooth enamel do?

Enamel helps protect your teeth from daily use such as chewing, biting, crunching and grinding. Although enamel is a hard protector of teeth, it can chip and crack. Enamel also insulates the teeth from potentially painful temperatures and chemicals.

What causes enamel erosion?

- Excessive soft drink consumption (high levels of phosphoric and citric acids)
- Fruit drinks (some acids in fruit drinks are more erosive than battery acid!)
- Dry mouth or low salivary flow
- Diet (high in sugar and starches)
- Acid reflux disease (GERD)
- Gastrointestinal problems
- Medications (aspirin, antihistamines)
- Genetics (inherited conditions)

How do you prevent enamel erosion?

To prevent enamel loss and keep teeth healthy, be sure to brush and floss your teeth daily. See your dentist every six months for regular checkups and cleanings. You can also try the following:

- Eliminate highly acidic foods and drinks from your diet
- Use a straw when you drink acidic drinks
- Chew sugar-free gum between meals
- Drink more water throughout your day
- Use fluoride toothpaste

Unlike a broken bone that can be repaired by the body, once a tooth chips or breaks the damage is done forever. Because enamel has no living cells, the body cannot repair chipped or cracked enamel.

