

# ODA PATIENT'S PAGE

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## SOUR CANDY

Sucking and chewing on sour candies has become a popular and seemingly harmless activity, especially among children, teens and young adults. In fact, the acid in sour candies weakens and wears away tooth enamel which is essential to healthy teeth. In some cases, the damage can be very severe and lead to permanent tooth loss.

### The Hard Facts About Sour Candies

- > In the past 20 years, candies marketed to children have increasingly been of a 'fruity' or 'sour' variety.
- > Sour candies are very acidic, with a low pH level.
- > Some candy is so acidic it can actually burn gums and cheeks.
- > Acid weakens and wears away tooth enamel.
- > Teeth without its protective enamel are prone to tooth decay.
- > Each acid attack lasts about 20 minutes.
- > Holding the acid in your mouth by prolonged candy sucking or chewing continues the acid attack.

### The Signs of Tooth Erosion

- > Sensitivity occurs when tooth enamel wears away. You may feel a twinge of pain when consuming hot, cold or sweet foods and drinks.
- > Discoloration is visible as a slight yellow appearance on the tooth surface.
- > Transparency of the front teeth appears along the biting edges.
- > Rounding of teeth occurs along the surfaces and edges of teeth.
- > Cracks and roughness appear along the edges of teeth.
- > Dents (known as cupping) develop on the chewing surfaces of the teeth. At this severe stage, fillings may actually appear to rise up.
- > Tooth decay occurs more easily when the protective outermost layer of enamel is lost.

### How to Protect Your Teeth

The best protection against tooth erosion is preventing acid attacks on your teeth. Eliminating or decreasing consumption of sour candies is the first line of defense against potential permanent damage to your teeth.

- > Reduce or eliminate consumption of sour candies.
- > Don't suck or chew sour candies for long periods of time. Continuous sucking prolongs acid attacks on your teeth.
- > If you do eat sour candy, swish your mouth with water, drink milk or eat cheese afterwards to neutralize the acids.
- > Chew sugar-free gum to produce saliva which protects tooth enamel.
- > After eating sour candy or other acidic food or drinks, wait one hour before brushing your teeth. Brushing right away increases the harmful effects of acid on teeth.
- > Ask your dentist about ways to reduce sensitivity or minimize enamel loss if erosion has begun.
- > Use fluoride toothpaste and a soft toothbrush to protect your teeth.



You may not notice tooth erosion in its early stages. However, sensitivity and discoloration are early warning signs of potentially more severe stages with continued acid attacks from eating sour candy.