

# THE FIGHT AGAINST ACID

Written by Dr. Pasha, Published by *The Auroran*



Dr. Pasha shares his knowledge and experience through published articles

DR. Pasha

I loved candy as a kid, but was always told that sugar was bad for my teeth. I couldn't go near a variety store without hearing my mother's voice in my head: "Your teeth WILL fall out!" What a shame. No more sugar, no more fun.

## A New Enemy

Why is acid so bad for your teeth? Simple: acid in your mouth erodes tooth enamel. But how did acid become the new enemy? Three reasons:

- 1) our interest in the health benefits of citrus fruits;
- 2) the sport and energy drink phenomenon; and
- 3) soda pop.

## What Acid Does

Our teeth come with a protective layer called enamel. Enamel protects the tooth's soft inner material, called dentin, from bacteria and trauma, but it has a weakness: it starts to dissolve when exposed to acid.

## The pH Scale

Quick lesson: the pH scale measures a solution's acidity, and ranges from 1 to 14. A pH of 7 is neutral; anything below that is acidic. Each whole pH value below 7 is ten times more acidic than the next higher value. The lower the PH level, the stronger the acid. In the case of tooth enamel, solutions with pH values lower than 5.5 can cause decay and erosion.

## Prevention

To prevent acid erosion it's best to avoid acidic drinks altogether. This gets tricky with things like citrus fruits consumed for our health. Limiting soda pop and

sport/energy drinks is a good choice, but these are often consumed out of habit- for example, as part a work routine.

If you consume something acidic, rinse your mouth with water, or follow with drinks or foods higher on the pH scale, like milk, yogurt or cheese.

Avoid brushing your teeth immediately after consuming acids, when the enamel is softer than normal. Brushing, especially with coarser toothpaste, amplifies wear and erosion.

## Tips For Battling Acid Erosion

Drink anything sweet or acidic through a straw to reduce contact with the teeth.

Rinse your mouth with water after consuming sweet drinks. Do this before brushing to help neutralize the acids

Chew xylitol gum or mints afterward to help restore pH to a less acidic level

Don't serve pop at bedtime. The liquid can pool in the mouth, coating the teeth with sugar and acid

Always use fluoride toothpaste to protect your enamel.

[Click here to see where your favourite drink ranks among the biggest acid erosion culprits.](#)