

Eating disorders

Protecting your oral health

Disordered eating and eating disorder behaviours, including restrictive eating, self-induced vomiting, binge eating, and the misuse of laxatives and diuretics, can negatively affect the health of the mouth and can sometimes cause visible signs within the mouth. A dentist may observe signs of disordered eating or an eating disorder when examining the mouth.

Your dentist, as part of your health care team, is here to support you and may ask questions about your eating behaviours so that they may help you with your oral health. Your dentist can additionally support you to link in with your doctor who can complete further assessments and refer you to a mental health treatment provider. Accessing support from your doctor and a mental health provider are important in helping you to overcome the disordered eating or eating disorder.

The impact of an eating disorder on oral health

Disordered eating behaviours can have a severe impact on the tissue within the mouth. It is important to discuss with your dentist the proper protection and treatment for your teeth to prevent long term oral health concerns.

Remember, any discussion with your dentist about your oral health is private, between yourself and your practitioners, and will remain confidential unless you would like it discussed with your health team.

Common signs in the mouth

Wearing away of the teeth (tooth erosion) from the acidic stomach contents softening the teeth.

Weakened and chipped teeth following tooth erosion.

Teeth can appear darker or more translucent as the white enamel layer is worn away.

An increase in tooth decay.

Teeth sensitivity to hot and cold temperatures.

Slow, soft tissue (gums) healing due to a lack of vitamins and minerals.

Damage to the back of the throat.

Cracking at the corners of the lips.

Visible decrease in saliva production.

A dry mouth.

Swollen salivary glands.

Tips for maintaining good oral health

Stay hydrated by drinking water, preferably tap water containing fluoride.

Brush your teeth using a higher fluoride toothpaste, available at most chemists.

If you have been vomiting, do not brush your teeth straight away.

The acid that has contacted your teeth may soften the surface of the teeth and brushing your teeth too soon can cause the surfaces to become worn. Instead, drink water or milk or rinse with a fluoride mouthwash.

For more information

It is possible to reduce disordered eating behaviours and recover from an eating disorder. With the right team and support, recovery is possible. If you think that you or someone you know may have an eating disorder or is engaging in disordered eating, it is important to seek help. The earlier you seek help, the closer you are to recovery. Your GP is a good first contact to seek support and access eating disorder treatment.

The [National Eating Disorders Collaboration \(NEDC\)](#) provides evidence-based information on the prevention and management of eating disorders, and information about recovery and support services within your state or territory.

Support

Butterfly National Helpline

phone: 1800 334 673

Open: 8am – midnight (AEST), 7 days a week

www.butterfly.org.au/get-support/helpline

For more
information
visit teeth.org.au

