

Rethink that acidic drink

EARLIER THIS year, the government launched its Change4Life Sugar Smart campaign, ringing alarm bells by highlighting that most children are consuming three times the recommended daily amount of sugar, contributing to tooth decay and obesity.

Equally troubling but less well publicised is the growing problem of tooth wear among children. Erosive tooth wear is caused by consuming acidic food and beverages, including sugar-laden sports and fizzy drinks (sugar-free varieties also cause wear), fruit juices and smoothies.

Professor Andrew Eder, an expert in tooth wear and clinical director of the London Tooth Wear Centre, is keen to raise awareness of this issue.

He says: "The latest government statistics reveal that this is an increasing problem among children. In addition, with 35 per cent of 12-year-olds and 28 per cent of 15-year-olds too embarrassed to smile or laugh due to the condition of their teeth, tooth wear and decay have the potential to affect self-esteem for life.

"The signs of tooth erosion include teeth that are short and unattractive, as well as having rough surfaces, plus tooth sensitivity when in contact with



Tooth wear caused by an acidic diet and tooth grinding in a 37-year-old

hot, cold or sweet items. If left untreated, many children's teeth may well require extensive restorative treatment as they approach adulthood."

However, says Professor Eder, there are some simple steps that can be incorporated into your child's everyday routine to help minimise tooth wear, including this advice:

- Limit the consumption of fruits, fruit juices and fizzy drinks, preferably to meal times.
- Drink still water or low-fat milk between meals.
- Use a straw for fizzy drinks and fruit

juices and avoid holding these liquids in the mouth or swishing them around. After having such drinks, wait an hour before brushing teeth.

- Choose a soft, child-friendly toothbrush with a small head.
- Use a non-abrasive toothpaste that contains a level of fluoride suitable for the child's age.

If you are worried about tooth wear (your own or your children's), tell your dentist; he or she is there to help.

toothwear.co.uk