

A background image showing two women in a professional setting, possibly a dental office. One woman is looking at a tablet held by the other. The image is overlaid with a blue gradient.

Eating disorders

Talking to your dentist

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.

If you are experiencing disordered eating or an eating disorder, your dentist can help you minimise and repair any damage to your mouth and teeth that may have been caused by malnutrition and acid erosion.

Seeking treatment for worn or damaged teeth

Discuss your oral health concerns with your dentist. 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.

Your dentist will need to look at your teeth to make a treatment plan. Examining your teeth may include a check-up, X-rays, photos, and/or moulds of the teeth.

If your teeth have been worn down, your dentist will discuss with you all available options to replace the missing tooth structure. Some damage may require specialist dental treatment. This may include a referral to a specialist.

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 general practitioner who can complete further assessments and refer you to a mental health treatment provider. Accessing support from your GP and a mental health provider are important in helping you to overcome the disordered eating or eating disorder.

After vomiting

Do not brush your teeth straight away.

The acid that has contacted your teeth may soften the surface of the teeth; brushing your teeth too soon can wear this surface away.

Wait at least 60 minutes before brushing or instead, drink water or milk or rinse with a fluoride mouthwash. The rinse will help to decrease the acidic mouth environment and strengthen tooth enamel.

Maintain good oral hygiene

Brush twice a day with a soft toothbrush and using a higher fluoride toothpaste.

Floss or use interdental brushes to clean between your teeth daily.

Stay hydrated

Dehydration can cause a dry mouth, which means less saliva. Consume water to stay hydrated, preferably tap water containing fluoride.

Saliva helps to flush and cleanse the mouth, acts to decrease the acidity of your mouth, and provides calcium and phosphate which help to strengthen teeth.

Talk to your dentist

Your dentist can recommend additional dental products that may be used to care for your teeth.

Follow your dentist's instructions to protect your teeth during your recovery.

For more information

It is possible to reduce disordered eating behaviours and recover from an eating disorder. 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.

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

