

Press Release

Media Contact: Grey Healthcare
Dorothy Yung : 2510 6765 / 9363 0084
Ellena Kam : 2510 6794 / 9171 8201

March 17, 2008

Tooth acid erosion affecting 90pc HK People aged 25-45, survey finds **The first enamel rehardening toothpaste against acid erosion introduced into HK**

Hong Kong people are increasingly health conscious but not enough on their oral hygiene, which subject them to various dental diseases without knowing it. Healthy modern lifestyles such as a regular intake of healthy food including fruits, juice and salad; a nip of red wine for heart health protection; and a practice of the “slow food movement” which encourages masticating food in the mouth for a long time...etc, are risk factors of tooth acid erosion. A recent survey reveals that 92 per cent of the respondents aged 25-45 are suffering from acid erosion, which has a negative impact on their appearance and chewing ability. Their enamel will be undermined, which may lead to other dental problems in the long run. Dentist advises HK people to be vigilant about tooth acid erosion, and use the latest enamel rehardening toothpaste to fight against acid erosion.

To ascertain the situation of tooth acid erosion in relations to dietary habits amongst HK people, GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) Limited has commissioned Public Opinion Programme of The University of Hong Kong (HKUPOP) to conduct a survey in February 2008. The survey findings of 520 respondents aged 25-45 with tooth acid erosion symptoms were presented by Ms. Karie Pang, Programme Manager of HKUPOP.

Respondents suffered from tooth acid erosion at the age of 28

- The survey reveals that 92 per cent of respondents aged 25-45 suffered from tooth acid erosion, amongst which 72 per cent had yellowish teeth, 62 per cent suffered from sensitive teeth and 54 per cent had cracked teeth.
- 21 per cent¹ of them had been suffering from tooth acid erosion for over eleven years without realizing the problem.
- They suffered from tooth acid erosion at the age of around 28.
- Nearly 80 per cent of respondents had tooth decay, and 53 per cent did not know about tooth acid erosion or had mistaken tooth acid erosion as tooth decay.
- 70 per cent of respondents had never heard of tooth acid erosion before and 73 per cent did not know about its symptoms.
- Nearly 90 per cent of respondents were regular consumers of acidic food or drink.
- Average daily food intake is 5.4 times.
- 21 per cent did not treat or did not know how to treat tooth acid erosion. Close to 60% of respondents had a wrong perception that brushing teeth immediately after meals could help prevent tooth acid erosion.

Acidic food are blamed for tooth acid erosion

Dr. CHU Chun Hung, Associate Professor in Family Dentistry, Faculty of Dentistry, The University of Hong Kong, is concerned about the survey findings. He said, “the survey reveals that tooth acid erosion is a common dental problem in Hong Kong. The fact that many local people know very little about the cause and the

¹ exclude 123 respondents who are unable to identify the timing

preventive measures of the disease, as well as using the wrong means to resolving it, is worrisome.” Dr. Chu said that tooth acid erosion is highly related to the intake of acidic food & drinks, from which the acidic substance softens the enamel on the tooth surface, causing it to wear off that subsequently brings acid erosion.

Remineralization fails due to frequent eating in a day

In fact, human saliva contains calcium and phosphorus etc. that help neutralize acidity, and can help repair tooth enamel through a process called remineralization. Yet the process usually requires about 1-2 hour(s) to complete. If one is eating too frequently, the process will be interrupted. Unavoidably, the tooth enamel will be softened and dissolved as a result which ends up in dental problems. In severe cases, the tooth pulp will be affected, resulting in intense pain, loss of appetite and depression. Other than that, the patient’s teeth will turn yellowish, become thin, develop cracks & shrink in size... etc, which will affect the patient’s appearance and confidence.

Avoid frequent consumption of acidic food and brushing teeth with force

According to a study on pH values of soft drinks conducted by Faculty of Dentistry, The University of Hong Kong in 2005, acidity of various popular soft drinks are very high, e.g., the pH value of Coke is 2.3, while kumquat lemon drink and sports drink are both at 2.8. To avoid developing tooth acid erosion, consumers should cut short the time for consuming these drinks. In addition, Dr. Chu reiterates that consumers should avoid brushing their teeth immediately after consuming acidic food or drinks (as this is when the enamel is at its softest) or brushing too hard, so as to prevent enamel loss.

Minimizing abrasion can help prevent tooth acid erosion

Dr. Chu states that the damage caused by tooth acid erosion is non-reversible. Vanished enamel cannot be restored. Expensive and complicated treatment may be required to resume the outlook of the teeth at the advanced stage of tooth acid erosion. Thus taking preventive measures is crucial and protecting enamel is important. Patients should be cautious about their dietary habits and frequency of food intake, and brush their teeth at least one hour after consuming acidic food or drinks. Sipping or holding acidic drinks in the mouth should be avoided. Drinking through a straw can help minimize the acidic damage of the drinks. Furthermore, using of soft toothbrush and low abrasive fluoride toothpaste are preferred for daily dental care.

The first anti-erosion toothpaste helps strengthening enamel

A survey in the UK showing that the special formula of the first enamel rehardening toothpaste (Sensodyne Pronamel) enable the teeth to have high enamel fluoride uptake, together with its low abrasivity, can help to reharden the teeth, and provide protection against tooth acid erosion.

Dr. Chu advises the public not to treat tooth acid erosion lightly. One should consult dentists if there are tooth acid erosion symptoms such as yellowish and thinner teeth, so as to minimize the long term damage.

- End -