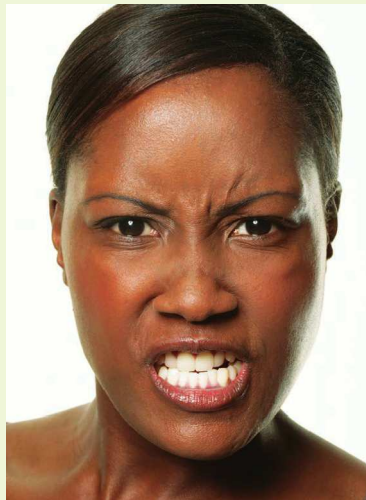


THE TOP FIVE HABITS THAT COULD BE HARMING YOUR TEETH

BY LISA EVANS

TAKING CARE OF YOUR TEETH ISN'T AS SIMPLE AS BRUSHING TWO TO THREE TIMES A DAY—ALTHOUGH YOU SHOULD DEFINITELY BE DOING THAT! SOME OF YOUR DAILY HABITS MAY BE WREAKING HAVOC ON YOUR SMILE, AND YOU MAY NOT EVEN KNOW IT. HERE ARE THE WORST OFFENDERS:



1 DRINKING COFFEE

The acid in your morning cup of java weakens and softens tooth structure, making your teeth more prone to damage from wear, such as grinding and even brushing.

2 USING YOUR TEETH AS SCISSORS

Opening bottle caps or plastic packaging with your teeth can cause cracking or chipping. Keep scissors and bottle openers handy. Repeat after me: your teeth are not scissors. Or a bottle opener.

3 COUGH DROPS

Although used for medicinal purposes, cough drops are loaded with sugar. This sugar is converted into an acid that eats away at your tooth's enamel, causing cavities. "The mouth's natural buffering solution, your saliva, takes 20

to 30 minutes after finishing a cough drop to 'cleanse itself' and return to a less sugary or acidic environment", says dental surgeon Dr. Morry Murad, DDS, of Toronto.

4 CHEWING ON PENCILS OR PENS

It may help you concentrate at work or school, but this habit can cause teeth to chip or break. Try chewing sugar-free gum instead.

5 CLENCHING OR GRINDING

This habit wears and destroys your teeth. "Either be aware and minimize the habit or if you are doing this unconsciously at night then use of a night guard should be considered", says Dr. Murad.

40+?

YOUR RISK OF ORAL CANCER IS HIGHER THAN IT USED TO BE, WHICH MAKES REGULAR CHECK-UPS WITH YOUR DENTIST DOUBLY IMPORTANT!

DROP THAT STRAW!

Add drinking from a straw to the list of anti-aging no-nos. Since it requires you to repeatedly pucker your mouth, it can cause fine lines if it's something you do regularly. Drink directly from the glass, can or bottle instead, and pack a long-wearing lipstick or lip gloss.

WHAT'S YOUR VIRTUE?

We've got a new favourite lip gloss, because it makes us feel oh-so-good about ourselves. What's Your Virtue?® is an Arizona-based beauty company that believes beauty starts from within and has created a line of glosses that speak to this philosophy. The Lip Bliss collection is comprised of six shades (\$12 each, at whatsyourvirtue.com) and their corresponding virtues: Devotion, a barely-there pink shimmer; Kindness, a warm coral shimmer; Curiosity – a rich mulberry shimmer; Wisdom – a bronzed red shimmer; Generosity – a golden brown sugar shimmer; Simplicity – a clear glossy shimmer. —MSP



PHOTOS: JOSEPH SARACENO, THINKSTOCK