



Although those who have eating disorders like bulimia and anorexia can often hide their disease from family and friends, they can't hide the oral effects that are easily seen by a dentist. In fact, 89% of people with bulimia have signs that show up in the mouth (National Eating Disorder Association, 2002).

BULIMIA

For those with bulimia, frequent vomiting is especially hard on the mouth. Harsh acid from the stomach coats the mouth after vomiting and wears away tooth enamel, mostly on the inside of the upper front teeth. The enamel erosion is often so bad that the enamel appears translucent and greatly increases the risk of tooth decay. Severe tooth decay can even lead to tooth loss.

Brushing the teeth immediately after vomiting only compounds the problem. Because stomach acids weaken the enamel, brushing causes it to wear away faster. Rinsing the mouth with water and using fluoride can help prevent decay and make teeth stronger during recovery from bulimia.

In addition to tooth decay, other oral effects of bulimia include swollen mouth, throat and salivary glands as well as dry mouth and bad breath.

Because of the destructive effects of bulimia on the mouth, any tooth restoration should begin after the disorder is under control. Temporary appliances can be provided in the meantime, but permanent tooth replacements such as fillings or crowns could be weakened by frequent vomiting. Including a dentist in the health care team can help ensure that recovery is successful for the entire body.

ANOREXIA

When the body is starved of food, even the mouth suffers the effects of lack of nutrients. The jaw bone can weaken from osteoporosis, which also weakens teeth and leads to tooth loss.

Good dental health can help better the health of bodies, minds and smiles!

For information on the TRICARE Dental Program, or to find more "Dental Health 101" tips, visit us online at www.TRICAREdentalprogram.com.

UNITED CONCORDIA
Insuring America's Dental Health