

## Dept. of Dental Surgery

## Editor's Pick

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**Hi dentist, I realized recently that my teeth are becoming “transparent”, I can see the centre portion of the teeth being opaque while the sides are of a lighter shade.**

**Gaps are also forming between my teeth and my gums bleed sometimes when I brushing my teeth. Is my tooth thinning and what should I do to solve this problem?**

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It sounds more like tooth erosion. Tooth erosion refers to the wearing away of the outer layer, the hardest part of your teeth, which is called the enamel, making the teeth appear transparent. The second layer is called dentin which is softer, is the part that's responsible for your tooth color – whether white, off white, grey, or yellowish. Followed by pulp in the middle of the tooth that contains nerves that conduct sensations of hot, cold and pain. There are many causes of tooth erosion:

- Worn away by acid. Too much intake of foods that contain acid, such as carbonated/soft drinks. They contain a lot of acid and can dissolve enamel on your teeth very quickly when you drink large amounts or you hold the drink in your mouth for a long time.
- Pure fruit juice. Juice contains a lot of acid.
- Bulimia and acid reflux. A person vomits to avoid gaining weight, and acid reflux also can cause tooth damage due to stomach acids.
- Another potential cause would be grinding of the teeth, which many do in their sleep without realizing
- Vigorous brushing can damage the enamel in your teeth and cause it to start wearing off. Consider using a brush with soft bristles.

The signs of enamel erosion can vary, depending on the stage. Some signs

may include:

- Sensitivity. Certain foods (sweets) and temperature of foods (hot or cold) may cause a twinge of pain in the early stage of enamel erosion.
- Discoloration. As the enamel erodes and more dentin is exposed, the teeth may appear yellow.
- Cracks and chips. The edges of teeth become more rough, irregular, and jagged as enamel erodes.
- Severe, painful sensitivity. In later stages of enamel erosion, teeth become extremely sensitive to temperatures and sweets. You may feel a painful jolt that takes your breath away.
- Cupping. Indentations appear on the surface of the teeth.

Here are some general things you can do to protect your teeth:

- Reduce or eliminate highly acidic foods and carbonated drinks. Rinse your mouth immediately with clear water after eating acidic foods or drinking acidic drinks. Drink acidic drinks with a straw so that the liquid is pushed to the back of the mouth.
- Monitor snacks. Snacking throughout the day increases the chance of tooth decay. The mouth is acidic for a few hours after eating foods high in sugar and starches. Avoid snacking unless you're able to rinse your mouth and brush teeth.
- Don't brush your teeth too hard and brush with a soft toothbrush
- Use fluoride toothpaste. Fluoride strengthens teeth, so make sure

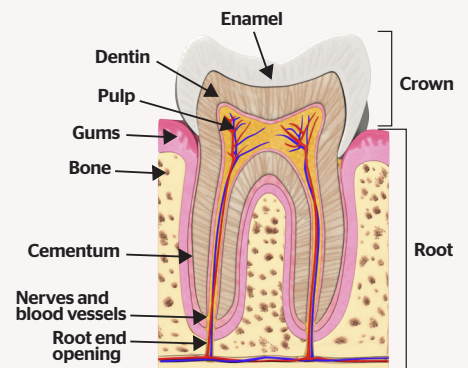
fluoride is listed as an ingredient in your toothpaste.

- Wear mouthguard to sleep if you have grinding problem.

Treatment of tooth enamel loss depends on the problem. Sometimes tooth colour filling is used to protect the tooth and increase cosmetic appearance. If the enamel loss is significant, the dentist may recommend covering the tooth with a crown. The crown may protect the tooth from further decay.

**Gum disease** – When you find spaces between the teeth that weren't there before and gums bleed when brushing your teeth, those are the signs of gum disease (Periodontitis). Other signs of gum diseases are bad breath, red gums and loose teeth.

Gum disease is caused by the bacteria that are normally in the mouth. If not treated, the bones, gums, and tissue that support the teeth are destroyed. The teeth may eventually become loose and have to be removed. Consult a dentist if you have any signs mentioned above. **PRIME**



**Dr Raymond Lim has been at the forefront of patient-centric dental care services and professional expertise since 2005. The National University of Singapore (NUS) alumnus who received a Bachelor of Dental Surgery (B.D.S) has advanced his professional career with three years at National Dental Centre treating trauma and emergency patients and a two-year post at polyclinics as the overall in charge. His subsequent years in private practice have further spurred his passion in implantology; he was awarded Aesthetic Implant Dentistry from the University of Uclan (UK) in 2011.**



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**Founding B9 Dental Centre in 2013, Dr Raymond has seen early success with its current group of three dental centres within the first year. Lauded for their comprehensive expertise and trusted service, B9 Dental Centre was awarded with Top 10 Special Achievement in Dental Care Awards by Promising SME 500 2014.**