



## *Drinks That Eat Teeth*

Everything you eat and drink affects the health of your body and your mouth, but some of the most concentrated and destructive combinations of acid and sugar are found in the beverages that many of us consume every day. Pathogenic oral bacteria thrive in a sugary, acidic environment. Enamel erosion and decay are most often caused by an excess of these two dietary elements. However, even without the presence of pathogenic oral bacteria, acid alone can erode tooth enamel and eventually destroy your teeth.

Enamel erosion begins at a pH level of 5.5 or lower. Acidic foods and beverages will certainly change the pH of your mouth for varying amounts of time, but the most destructive source of acid in the mouth comes from the bacteria itself. When oral bacteria feeds on sugar and other simple carbohydrates, they release acid as a byproduct. As long as the bacteria are continuously provided with the simple sugars they need, the pH of your mouth will continue to become more acidic. Even a neutral or alkaline beverage will eventually contribute to the erosion of your teeth if that beverage contains simple carbohydrates or added sugars.

### **What About Coconut Water?**

In recent years, coconut water has become an extremely popular substitute for traditional electrolyte replacement beverages. Sports and energy drinks certainly do tend to be highly acidic, full of sugar, and enhanced with artificial flavors and colors. On the other hand, coconut water is a natural source of potassium, is alkaline in the body, and poses far less threat to your teeth when unsweetened.

Early claims of coconut water companies suggested that coconut water was equal or superior to traditional sports beverages in electrolyte replacement. That still may be true of coconut water that is consumed straight from the coconut. However, commercially available coconut waters

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### **What About Coconut Water? (cont'd)**

continue to test with sodium levels far below what is required for adequate rehydration after strenuous exercise. That being said, coconut water still may be a better choice for regular use. Sodium enriched coconut waters are now more available, and certainly you can easily add a small amount of salt to the unenriched versions yourself. When choosing a coconut water to replace a traditional sports drink, remember these tips:

- If you choose to drink flavored coconut water, avoid the acidic flavors (lemon, lime). Read the labels, and chose unsweetened brands or those sweetened only with low-glycemic sugars.
- Try drinking unsweetened coconut water as much as possible, and only add your own low-glycemic sweetener if you need to.
- Look for a sodium enriched coconut water, or consider adding a small amount of salt to an unenriched brand yourself.

### **Acidity Chart**

The best daily beverage you can drink for the health of your body is plain, unflavored water. When you choose to drink something else, however, please consider the effects that beverage may be having on your teeth. This chart contains many of the most common soft drinks, energy drinks, juices, and sports beverages on the market. If a drink you consume regularly is not on this list, we encourage you to check the ingredients for added sugars and sources of acid, or even to test the pH for yourself.

Test kits are widely available online and in many pharmacies. Any beverage that tests at or below 5.5 will not only begin to erode your teeth over time, but will also promote the acidic environment in your mouth that pathogenic plaques need to thrive.

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<i>Drink</i>	<i>pH</i>	<i>Added Sugar</i> (Teaspoons in 12 oz.)
Battery Acid (Baseline)	1	0
Stomach Acid (Baseline)	2	0
Fresh Lemon or Lime Juice	2.00 - 2.60	0
Cranberry Juice, Unsweetened	2.30 - 2.52	0
White Vinegar	2.40 - 3.40	0
Sunny Delight	2.4	6.3
Gatorade	2.40 - 2.95	5.5
Pepsi	2.49	9.8
Pepsi One	3.05	0
Country Time Lemonade	2.5	5.4
Cherry Coke	2.52	8.9
Diet Cherry Coke	2.8	0
Coke Classic	2.53	9.3
Diet Coke	3.39	0
Hi-C	2.7	5.5
Tang	2.7	5.1
Powerade	2.75	5
Mellow Yellow	2.8	10.1
Hawaiian Fruit Punch	2.82	10.2

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<i>Drink</i>	<i>pH</i>	<i>Added Sugar</i> (Teaspoons in 12 oz.)
Squirt	2.85	9.5
Lipton Brisk	2.87	7
Dr. Pepper	2.92	9.5
Diet Dr. Pepper	3.41	0
Nestea Sweetened Lemon Iced Tea	2.97	7
Grapefruit Juice (Sweetened)	3	7.4
Grapefruit Juice (Unsweetened)	3	0
Sierra Mist	3	5.5
Fresca	3.2	0
Propel	3.2	0.4
Snapple Tea	3.2	7.6
Diet Snapple Tea	3.2	0
Mountain Dew	3.22	11
Diet Mountain Dew	3.34	0
Pineapple Juice (Unsweetened)	3.30 - 3.60	0
Orange Juice (Unsweetened)	3.30 - 4.19	0
Apple Juice (Sweetened)	3.4	4.8
Sprite	3.42	9

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<i>Drink</i>	<i>pH</i>	<i>Added Sugar</i> (Teaspoons in 12 oz.)
Juicy Juice	3.5	4.6
Vegetable Juice	3.90 - 4.30	0
Prune Juice	3.95 - 3.97	0
Root Beer	4.00 - 4.60	9.0 - 10.5
Diet Root Beer	4.00 - 4.60	0
Tomato Juice	4.10 - 4.60	0
Buttermilk	4.41 - 4.83	0
Black Coffee	5.51	0
Black Tea	6.00 - 6.40	0
Milk	6.40 - 6.80	0
Coconut Milk & Water	6.10 - 7.00	0
Water	7	0
Soy Milk (Unsweetened)	7	0

*Source: Carifree.com*

**References:**

Kaplan University: *Coconut water: Is it really “nature’s sport drink”?*