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Soda and Illegal Drugs Cause Similar Damage to Teeth

CHICAGO (May 28, 2013)—Addicted to soda? You may be shocked to learn that drinking large quantities of your favorite carbonated soda could be as damaging to your teeth as methamphetamine and crack cocaine use. The consumption of illegal drugs and abusive intake of soda can cause similar damage to your mouth through the process of tooth erosion, according to a case study published in the March/April 2013 issue of *General Dentistry*, the peer-reviewed clinical journal of the Academy of General Dentistry (AGD).

Tooth erosion occurs when acid wears away tooth enamel, which is the glossy, protective outside layer of the tooth. Without the protection of enamel, teeth are more susceptible to developing cavities, as well as becoming sensitive, cracked, and discolored.

The *General Dentistry* case study compared the damage in three individuals' mouths—an admitted user of methamphetamine, a previous longtime user of cocaine, and an excessive diet soda drinker. Each participant admitted to having poor oral hygiene and not visiting a dentist on a regular basis. Researchers found the same type and severity of damage from tooth erosion in each participant's mouth.

"Each person experienced severe tooth erosion caused by the high acid levels present in their 'drug' of choice—meth, crack, or soda," says Mohamed A. Bassiouny, DMD, MSc, PhD, lead author of the study.

"The citric acid present in both regular and diet soda is known to have a high potential for causing tooth erosion," says Dr. Bassiouny.

Similar to citric acid, the ingredients used in preparing methamphetamine can include extremely corrosive materials, such as battery acid, lantern fuel, and drain cleaner. Crack cocaine is highly acidic in nature, as well.

The individual who abused soda consumed 2 liters of diet soda daily for three to five years. Says Dr. Bassiouny, "The striking similarities found in this study should be a wake-up call to consumers who think that soda—even diet soda—is not harmful to their oral health."

AGD Spokesperson Eugene Antenucci, DDS, FAGD, recommends that his patients minimize their intake of soda and drink more water. Additionally, he advises them to either chew sugar-free gum or rinse the mouth with water following consumption of soda. "Both tactics increase saliva flow, which naturally helps to return the acidity levels in the mouth to normal," he says.

To see photos showing the similarities between damage caused to teeth by the soda abuser and the methamphetamine user, email media@agd.org.

To learn more about oral health, visit KnowYourTeeth.com.

About KnowYourTeeth.com

KnowYourTeeth.com is the Academy of General Dentistry's (AGD) source of consumer information on dental care and oral health. Its goal is to provide reliable information in a format that is easy to use and navigate, and to provide the tools that will help consumers of all ages to care for their teeth and with other aspects of oral care. KnowYourTeeth.com answers important dental health questions, offers the latest information on current dental treatments and tips for first-rate oral hygiene, and can help visitors find qualified dentists near where they live or work.

About the Academy of General Dentistry

The Academy of General Dentistry (AGD) is a professional association of 38,000 general dentists dedicated to providing quality dental care and oral health education to the public. AGD members stay up-to-date in their profession through a commitment to continuing education. Founded in 1952, the AGD is the second largest dental association in the United States, and it is the only association that exclusively represents the needs and interests of general dentists. A general dentist is the primary care provider for patients of all ages and is responsible for the diagnosis, treatment, management, and overall coordination of services related to patients' oral health needs. For more information about the AGD, visit www.agd.org. The AGD is a member of the Partnership for Healthy Mouths, Healthy Lives, a first-of-its-kind national dental coalition composed of 35 leading dental health organizations. The Partnership's campaign is designed to educate parents and caregivers on how to improve their children's oral health in simple ways. The campaign offers families oral health resources through the website 2min2x.org.

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