

# TIK TOK TEETH

## Disastrous DIY dental hacks – telling it straight



Dental trends come and go but some are certainly more damaging than others and the ones relating to teeth are guaranteed to make most of us wince in discomfort at the thought. For a few years now social media influencers have been posting about treating dental issues at home, including closing gaps between teeth with rubber bands, removing braces with a spoon - or smoothing uneven edges with nail files.

While Gen Zs in particular are embracing these dangerous shortcuts to dental perfection, such nonsense DIY hacks which have gone viral on Tik Tok, can create irreversible tooth damage and may end up costing the experimenter more in the long run.

This Dental Health Week (7-13th August) the Australian Dental Association is warning people of the problems associated with these DIY dental hacks - while some may superficially appear harmless, there are often many unintended consequences that can't be easily seen like loss of supporting tooth structure.

### SURFACE SMOOTHING

"Nail files and sandpaper are not suitable for smoothing and grinding the edges of the teeth," said the ADA's Oral Health Promoter Dr Janani Ravichandran.

"The grit is too hard and rough to be used safely on your teeth without damaging your tooth enamel. The nail bed also harbours extensive numbers of bacteria that you're transferring to your mouth by using a nail file.

**"ONE TIK TOK USER WHO USED A NAIL FILE TO POLISH DOWN HER TEETH ENDED UP FILING RIGHT INTO THE NERVE OF HER TOOTH, CAUSING CONSIDERABLE PAIN. SHE NEEDED MORE DENTAL TREATMENT TO SAVE HER TOOTH AND THIS WOULD HAVE COST HER A LOT MORE IN TIME, MONEY AND PAIN THAN IF SHE'D GONE TO A DENTIST IN THE FIRST PLACE."**

Professional dental polishing equipment and materials are specially designed for teeth – talk to your dentist about adjusting minor imperfections.

### HARSH DRINKS

Many DIY hacks lead to irreversible loss of enamel. Once enamel is lost it does not grow back. It exposes softer layers beneath that are more susceptible to damage and acid attack, so avoid:

- Healthy gut tonics including warm lemon water or balsamic vinegar with soda which can wreak havoc on teeth due to their high levels of acidity, contributing to enamel loss.

- Cola and apple cider vinegar are even more acidic and shouldn't be swished around the mouth to remove stains.

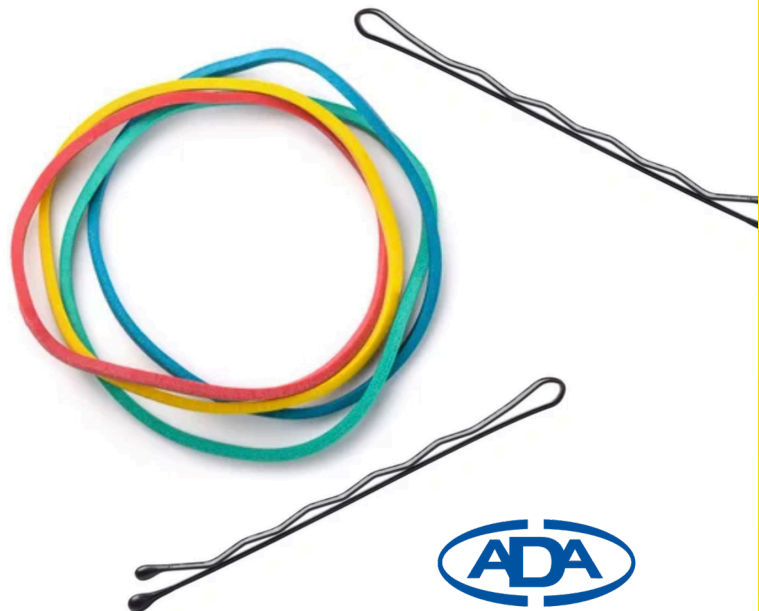
Don't brush your teeth straight away after drinking or consuming anything acidic. The tooth is in a vulnerable state, and you could scrub away further enamel. Rinse your mouth with water and wait an hour before brushing with fluoride toothpaste.

### TEETH WHITENING

People wanting a white smile are warned to consider the harms DIY hacks can do - many have been found to be too abrasive and acidic.

- Steer clear of crushed cucumbers, kiwifruit and strawberries to whiten teeth. These foods all contain acids that will dissolve tooth enamel over time.
- Home-made toothpaste made from rough and scratchy materials like baking soda, bentonite clay, charcoal, cinnamon, salt and powdered eggshells are also not a good idea. They may even cause the user an unwanted reaction. Over-the-counter toothpaste is lab-tested to remove stains without damaging your teeth.
- Rubbing your teeth with a 'magic eraser' (a small white sponge used to remove stains on kitchen work surfaces). Though these products feel soft, they're made of hard plastic and may damage your tooth enamel which doesn't grow back. Stick to using magic erasers for cleaning stubborn kitchen stains.
- Don't apply hydrogen peroxide or other bleaches like the ones purchased from the pharmacy to bleach hair, directly to your teeth. They can cause chemical burns to your mouth and throat or worse if ingested.

Professional teeth whitening products like take-home whitening products from your dentist, are a much safer option as they use plastic trays which are customised to the shape of your teeth and peroxide at a safe level that won't damage teeth. Your dentist will always give clear instructions on how use these kits to whiten your teeth safely at home.



### STRAIGHTENING

Using a rubber band to try and straighten your teeth or removing your own braces before the orthodontist or dentist recommends it, can actually cause permanent damage to your teeth, gums and jawbone.

Elastic bands and hair pins can scratch, injure and strain the teeth, gums and jawbone causing permanent damage that may require professional dental treatment or worst-case scenario, could result in tooth loss. Removing your braces early can take away all the hard work and your teeth can move back to where they were originally. Orthodontists and dentists are specially trained in tooth movement and use precise measurements and equipment to safely adjust the positioning of the teeth gradually and safely.

### TOOTHACHE

If you have a toothache, never put an aspirin tablet inside your mouth next to your gums. This can cause a burn on your gums. See a dentist to get the help you need.

The ADA's Oral Health Promoter Dr Janani Ravichandran warns: "The ADA does not recommend any form of do-it-yourself treatments at home or otherwise.

"What you think may save you money in the short term, may end up costing you more in the long run when you still have to seek professional dental care to fix what you've tried to remedy yourself at home."