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In this Issue of Our Newsletter:

Sports Drink Can Be Tough on Teeth
The energizing beverages are harmful to enamel, dentists say



(HealthDay News) -- Sports and energy drinks can be wonderful potions that hydrate top-tier athletes and weekend warriors alike.

But here's some advice about their use, not from your trainer or your coach, but from a dental school professor: If you choose to use them, chug them. Don't sip or savor them all day.

That's what J. Anthony von Fraunhofer, director of biomaterials research at the University of Maryland Dental School in Baltimore suggests. Otherwise, the drinks could be eating away your enamel, setting you up for tooth decay and other dental problems.

Energy drinks and citrus-flavored beverages -- like many sports drinks -- are more abrasive on tooth enamel than tea or even cola drinks, von Fraunhofer reported in a recent issue of the journal *General Dentistry*.

In the study, he exposed enamel from teeth that had been extracted due to cavities or other problems to a variety of beverages, including energy drinks, fitness water and sports drinks, lemonade and ice tea. He simulated 13 years of exposure during normal beverage consumption, while weighing the teeth before and after exposure to calculate enamel dissolution.

While all the drinks produced some enamel damage, von Fraunhofer found the most wear occurred, in descending order, from -- lemonade, energy drinks, sports drinks, fitness water (often with citrus flavors), ice tea and cola.

Von Fraunhofer said most cola drinks contain acids, but energy and sport drinks also contain other organic acids that can speed up damage to the enamel.

"Anything that contained citrus flavoring did a number on the teeth," he said.

The Academy of General Dentistry, which publishes the journal, does not have an official stand on specific beverages and their potential for damaging enamel, said spokeswoman Susan Urbanczyk.

But the sports-drink industry says there's no link between the beverages and dental problems.

"The study from Maryland uses an experimental approach that takes the tooth out of the mouth and uses a non-real-world situation to see if beverages have an impact on tooth weight," Craig Horswill, senior research fellow at the Gatorade Sports Science Institute, said in a prepared statement. He pointed to another

study, published in the European journal Caries Research in 2002, that found no relationship between sports-drink consumption and dental erosion in more than 300 athletes.

Still, dentists like Dr. Craig W. Valentine of Lakeland, Fla., urge caution, adding that with summer approaching, kids and adults should limit their intake of the sports and energy drinks to minimize tooth harm.

No one's saying avoid the drinks, but people tend to sip them continuously, Valentine said. "Out playing tennis, for instance, every time you change sides, you may swig. It's that constant acid attack that is causing the problem," he said.

Valentine's advice: "If you are going to drink sports drinks or colas, drink them quickly and then try to rinse your mouth."

"Or use a straw," he added. "It gets it past your teeth."

Van Fraunhofer said: "The integrity of the tooth is dependent on having the enamel there. Once the enamel is gone, it is gone."

And resist the urge to grab your toothbrush after consuming sports drinks, he said, adding, "Toothpaste is a bit abrasive. It will work it [the acids] in."

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Dr. Petrosky & Staff

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