

Tooth wear, diagnosis and treatment: part one

CLINICAL
TIPS

Nishan Dixit explores tooth surface loss – and how to talk to patients about it

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There are several possible different causes for tooth wear. These, for example, include: acid erosion due to regular consumption of acidic food and drink or gastric reflux; attrition due to malocclusion; abrasion due to heavy toothbrushing; or a combination of several of these factors. This can present a challenge when it comes to diagnosing tooth wear in some patients.

Diagnosis protocols

Establishing a standardised set of protocols to follow when a patient presents will encourage a more efficient diagnostic process. Below is the sequence I follow:

- Identify tooth surface loss (TSL) during consultation
- Bring the situation to the patient's attention

- Take intraoral photos to record the current oral health condition and support patient understanding
- Take baseline intraoral scan with the Itero
- Take a full patient history, including diet, personal habits, possibility of parafunction etc.
- Once potential causes of tooth wear are identified, discuss ways of reducing or eliminating them with the patient
- Explore possible treatment options to restore any damage and prevent it from happening in the future
- Show the patient a diagnostic mock-up
- Start treatment using a conservative approach.

Communication is king

A reliable diagnosis requires good understanding of the patient's behaviours. To determine these, an effective practitioner-patient relationship is crucial. This is based on good communication.

I find that visual aids are crucial for effectively communicating with patients. Where TSL is found, it is helpful to show the patient what the ideal length and shape of the tooth would be, perhaps using digital software or composite mock-ups.

The cause of the tooth wear will influence what the patient needs to do

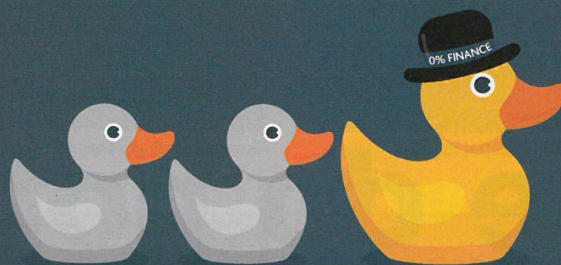
This will improve their understanding of both the severity and potential development of the problem and motivate them to find and implement a solution.

The cause of the tooth wear will influence what the patient needs to do, whether that's changing their diet or undergoing orthodontic and restorative treatment.

Professional confidence

To effectively communicate possible causes and treatment of tooth wear, it is crucial that clinicians are confident in their knowledge and skills within the field.

For anyone who wishes to strengthen this aspect of their clinical repertoire, there are an array of training courses and learning opportunities available across the UK to make use of. **D**



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