



# ARE YOUR TEETH AGEING YOU?

Taking care of your smile is one of your best long-term beauty investments. *Nicola Down* explains the options

## FORGET FILLERS, BRUSH OFF

Botox and throw your antioxidant-packed superfoods in the bin (OK, obviously don't do the last one, but at least bear with us). While cosmetic procedures take the limelight, you could be ignoring one of the most effective anti-ageing tools at your disposal.

'You can go to Pilates daily and drink your body weight in green juice, but if you don't show your mouth some care, you'll look older than you are,' says Dr Uchenna Okoye, clinical director of the London Smiling Dental Group ([londonsmiling.com](http://londonsmiling.com)), who has perfected the teeth of countless celebrities and models. 'The colour, shape and health of your teeth are so important because they affect how you feel about yourself, too.'

## THE POWER SMILE STATUS SYMBOL

The new age-defying smile isn't about the 'fake' look. There's brightness, but the look du jour is off-white, not a 'Whoa, where are my sunglasses?' dazzle. Yes, it's straight and symmetrical, but also natural-looking (or as near as it gets). It suggests that you've never chosen a lie-in over flossing, binged on Cadbury's or had red wine in your life.

But this healthy, youthful look doesn't come easily. 'There's been a steady increase in the number of young women with lifestyle-related tooth erosion,' says dentist Dr Katie Grimes ([re-enhance.com](http://re-enhance.com)). 'Juices, smoothies, herbal tea and health drinks can contain high levels of phosphoric and citric acid, as well as sugar, which triggers decay.' Take fruit tea – did you know some have been

found to erode teeth as much as orange juice? And your Friday night prosecco? The bubbles are caused by carbon dioxide, which is acidic. 'Erosion causes chipping and even destruction of the teeth, but you also lose whiteness as dentine, which is naturally yellow, can be seen through the thinning enamel,' says Dr Grimes.

It's not just what you eat and drink, but how. Experts say the trend for grazing throughout the day is triggering ageing dental troubles. This is because the 'healthy' (but surprisingly sugary) snacks we're nibbling on like fruit, cereal bars and sweetened popcorn are making it hard for our teeth's natural defenses to do their job. 'When you graze on sugary foods, even small amounts, your teeth are under constant attack,' says Dr Okoye. 'When you have something sweet, within 30-40 minutes your saliva is working hard to neutralise the acidity, but it can't do that if you're grazing.' The solution? ►