

Restoring a Smile

Bulimia can have many terrible side-effects, but sufferers may be unaware of the devastating effect it can have on their teeth. Smile Design's Komal Suri explains how she restored a smile for a bulimia sufferer

When Jo Measure started her 12-year battle with bulimia she knew some, but not all of the risks.

Bulimics experience anxiety and persistent mental issues with body weight and shape which lead to repeated episodes of bingeing (consuming large amounts of food in a short time) then induced vomiting and/or excessive exercise to control weight.

Jo would induce vomiting and from the start she probably knew she could be facing years of digestive problems,



Jo before her restorative treatment

possible damage to her stomach and vocal chords, bad skin and breath and even organ damage, but she didn't think about it destroying her smile. In fact, Google the words "Bulimia Side Effects" and it comes up with 28 physical and mental side-effects including "dental problems".

However "dental problems" doesn't really paint an accurate picture. The scary truth is that through years of forced vomiting an entire set of healthy teeth can be destroyed.

The erosion is caused by hydrochloric
www.lemagazine.co.uk

acid from the stomach. This acid destroys the protective coating of enamel on teeth, leaving them vulnerable to quick decay. Once this layer of white enamel is gone, a softer layer of dentin is exposed. This layer is vulnerable and disappears quickly. Normal activities, such as eating, further wear down this layer of dentin until all that remain are small discoloured and sensitive stumps.

In fact dentists can always tell if their patient is bulimic. Erosion patterns in the mouth are distinct and quite different from other sources of decay. Through these patterns, a dentist can even tell approximately how long a patient has been suffering from bulimia. About 28 per cent of people with bulimia are diagnosed with this disorder after having an examination with their dentist.

Jo realised too late that her teeth were suffering. "We are all sick from time to time, but for me it was a daily occurrence for 12 years - which vastly accelerated the ageing process of my teeth", she says.

"I had no idea as a teenager that my bulimia was affecting my teeth so badly, but even if I'd been aware of the consequences, I doubt it would have helped me recover - bulimia is so powerful."

Although Jo suffered no pain as her teeth eroded, by adulthood she felt they were unsightly and made her look older and consequently feel self-conscious.

"I had always enjoyed a good laugh and had a broad smile on my face - but as my teeth worsened, I consciously kept my mouth closed when I smiled. I even got to the point where I told



myself not to smile at all. It was time to take action!"

Action took the form of a visit to Smile Design Dental Practice in Wendover for a consultation and then treatment with Dr Komal Suri.

Dr Suri explains: "I have seen many people who have suffered the long-term effects of bulimia - few realise how badly the condition can affect their teeth, bite and facial appearance.

"Since my training is in the latest aesthetic and restorative techniques, I was able to help Jo and we made her a beautiful set of 14 shell crowns which are as thin as veneers to cover her eroded teeth and give her a lovely smile again."

Dr Suri, who lectures nationally and internationally on restorative and cosmetic dentistry adds: "Jo's case also underlines the importance of regular dental examination appointments. Her dental problems could have been recognised and dealt with years ago.

"Had she realised sooner the harm she was doing to herself, she might have combated the condition early enough to save her teeth - instead, shell crowns were the only solution."

Today, it's not only Jo's teeth that have been restored her smile has returned, along with her self-confidence.

"It's amazing how the treatment has boosted my self-esteem. When I look back at old photos of me smiling, my mouth was always closed - it's a different matter now!" laughed Jo.



To find out if your teeth are suitable for cosmetic or restorative treatment contact Smile Design Dental Practice for a free consultation 01296 624163