



## spotlight on health

### Erosion Of Dental Enamel May Be Result Of Acid Reflux

(NAPSA)—More than 60 million American adults experience heartburn at least once a month, yet many do not realize that it can have significant—and sometimes unexpected—consequences if untreated. Heartburn is often accompanied by acid reflux up the esophagus and into the mouth, which, over time, can cause tooth enamel to erode. Therefore, odd as it may sound, if you have frequent heartburn and acid reflux, your dentist—as well as your doctor—may need to know.

Your heartburn may be a symptom of gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD), a disorder of the digestive tract, or a more severe form of GERD, known as erosive GERD. GERD occurs when the lower esophageal sphincter (LES), the valve that connects the esophagus to the stomach, relaxes and allows digestive acids to reflux. Erosive GERD occurs when the lining of the esophagus is damaged from long-term acid exposure.

“If you suffer from heartburn regularly, and often experience a bitter or acidic taste in your mouth, GERD or erosive GERD may be to blame,” says Susannah Spiess, M.D., fellow of the American College of Physicians, attending gastroenterologist at Evanston Northwestern Healthcare and assistant professor at Northwestern University Medical School,



Evanston, IL. “These symptoms should not be ignored, because once the acid has reached your mouth, the potential exists for your teeth to be damaged.”

Dental erosion begins with subtle changes in the surface enamel and can progress to severe tooth decay.

Areas shown to be affected by gastric juices are the upper incisors (the cutting teeth at the front of your mouth). An oral examination that shows extensive loss of enamel and exposed dentin (the part of the tooth beneath the enamel), may suggest the presence of GERD or erosive GERD. People with symptoms of GERD and erosive GERD should receive an accurate diagnosis and appropriate treatment, because prolonged exposure to reflux acid may cause irreversible damage to their teeth.

When lifestyle changes and

non-prescription medicines are unsuccessful at treating symptoms, and erosive GERD is then diagnosed, physicians may prescribe medication. Proton pump inhibitors (PPIs), such as Aciphex® (rabeprazole sodium), are the latest pharmaceutical advance in providing effective healing and relief from symptoms of erosive GERD, such as heartburn. Aciphex also is indicated for treatment of duodenal ulcers and long-term maintenance of healing of erosive GERD and its symptoms. Aciphex is available in easy-to-swallow 20-mg. enteric-coated tablets. Aciphex product labeling recommends once-daily dosing for most indications.

In clinical trials, Aciphex demonstrated a favorable side effect profile. Headache was the most common side effect assessed as possibly related to Aciphex (2.4% vs. 1.6% for placebo). Aciphex is contraindicated in patients with known sensitivity to rabeprazole, substituted benzimidazoles or any component of the formulation. As is the case for other proton pump inhibitors, symptomatic response to therapy with Aciphex does not preclude the presence of gastric malignancy. Proton pump inhibitors, however, constitute an established class of drugs that has been shown to be well tolerated.