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## **When Bulimia Damages a Smile, Prosthodontists Can Fix It**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE** – CHICAGO –“We don’t realize how important our smile is until it’s gone,” reveals Allison, a recovering bulimic. She required innovative dental treatment to restore teeth damaged by bulimic erosion. National Eating Disorders Awareness Week is February 24-March 2, 2013.

The statistics are staggering. According to the [National Eating Disorders Association](http://NationalEatingDisordersAssociation.org), 20 million women and 10 million men in the United States suffer from a clinically significant eating disorder at some time in their life, including bulimia, binge eating disorder and anorexia.

While the effects of anorexia become noticeable to others, the visible effects of bulimia are more subtle. A tooth is like a chocolate coated candy; a hard shell (enamel) on the outside yet soft on the inside (dentin). At first, teeth may **not look** damaged from the front for many bulimics; the patient may not notice it when they look in the mirror.

Prosthodontists see a different story when performing a dental exam. [Prosthodontists](http://Prosthodontists.org) are specialized dentists with advanced training in oral health issues such as restoring tooth enamel eroded in the prolonged acidic environment of a bulimic’s mouth.

“During the dental exam, I see severe wear behind the teeth due to acid erosion,” said board certified prosthodontist Kenneth S. Kurtz, DDS, FACP, of New York, “Even biting into a pretzel stick can chip or crack a tooth damaged by bulimia.”

How long does it take the surface to wear down?

“Like most complex medical problems, it depends on age of onset, and if the incidence of purging can be categorized as mild, moderate or severe, in frequency. With severe bulimia, if a patient is purging 20 times a day, in 3-4 years the teeth can readily chip. The teeth are like any other organ in our body that can become severely damaged from destructive habits,” said Dr. Kurtz.

First, the edge of tooth chips, after the tooth becomes brittle from bulimic erosion. Next, as patients continue to purge their stomach content, the width of the tooth diminishes so that it can no longer resist fracture by harder

food items. Soon, when an afflicted patient bites on a pretzel stick at 18-years-old, the tooth resists fracture, but at 20-years-old, biting this same thing chips off the tooth. After part of the tooth structure is lost, the patient becomes aware of the severity of the tooth damage.

“As a prosthodontist, when patients come to us, their teeth can already be severely damaged,” said Dr. Kurtz. “Allison, a recovering bulimic, shares the restoration of her smile, in a video, *Allison’s Story*, on [GoToAPro.org](http://GoToAPro.org) to help others. I’ve known Allison since birth, and when she decided to bring back her smile, she sought the care of a prosthodontist.”

“As a board certified prosthodontist and a specialist in reconstructive, esthetic and implant dentistry, I have had the opportunity to treat a number of these patients. The positive effect of restoring a healthy smile is immeasurable,” said Dr. Kurtz.

For the recovering bulimic looking to restore teeth damaged by erosion and wear, [GoToAPro.org](http://GoToAPro.org) provides information on the specialized training and services provided by the prosthodontist, as well as how to locate one in your area.

Prosthodontists are proficient in comprehensive oral health diagnosis, treatment planning and restoration. From restoring smiles damaged by bulimia, to helping more than 178 million Americans missing one or more teeth get implants, crowns, veneers or dentures, prosthodontists offer oral health solutions. Simply put, a prosthodontist has the skills and training to restore optimal appearance and function to your smile.

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*The American College of Prosthodontists is the professional association of dentists with advanced specialty training who restore and replace teeth to create optimal oral health, both in function and appearance including dental implants, dentures, veneers, crowns and teeth whitening. For more information or to find a prosthodontist near you, visit [GoToAPro.org](http://GoToAPro.org).*