**Footballers have worse teeth than the general public, study reveals**

Tooth decay was 10 per cent higher compared to those of a similar age in the general public, UCL finds

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A study has revealed that professional footballers have poor teeth, with a nearly four out of 10 players having cavities.

Carried out in the British Journal of Sports Medicine, dentists checked the teeth of players at eight clubs in England and Wales, with West Ham medical staff admitting that athletes often had teeth in a poorer condition than the general population.

Dentists from the [International Centre for Evidence-Based Oral Health at University College London](http://bjsm.bmj.com/content/early/2015/10/01/bjsports-2015-094953.full), the teeth of 187 players from the clubs.

They found that more than half (53 per cent) had dental erosion, 45 per cent were bothered by the state of their teeth, with seven per cent saying that it had an impact on training or performance. Another 20 per cent even said the state of their teeth impacted on their quality of life.

Tooth decay was 10 per cent higher in the players examined, at 40 per cent compared with 30 per cent of people of a similar age in the general public.

"These are individuals who otherwise invest so much in themselves so it's a surprising finding," Prof Ian Needleman, one of the researchers, told the BBC.

"There are two main groups - some have a catastrophic effect, they have very severe abscesses that stop them in their tracks and they cannot play or train.

"There'll be others experiencing pain affecting sleeping or sensitivity every time they take a drink.

"At this level of athlete, even small differences can be quite telling."

Nutrition and the frequent consumption of sugary and acidic foods is though to be one of the main causes, while a lot of air in the mouth - and therefore less protection from saliva - is another.

Players from Manchester United, Hull City, Southampton, Swansea City, West HamUnited, Brighton & Hove Albion, Cardiff City and Sheffield United all took part in the study.

Prof Needleman added that clubs are now giving dental health a "higher priority".