

TOOTH SENSITIVITY

What to Do about Sensitive Teeth

Many of us sometimes experience sudden and often sharp pain when teeth are exposed to very hot or cold liquids or foods, a rush of air, normal brushing or flossing. If this happens frequently enough to concern you, there are a number of things you—and in more serious cases your dentist—can do to reduce unpleasant symptoms.

The Causes of Tooth Sensitivity

There are nerves inside of healthy teeth encased in dentin, which is perforated by tiny tubes. The dentin is shielded by enamel on the visible crown of the tooth and by cementum below the gum line. If these protective coatings are damaged by fractures or excessive wear, or if the roots are exposed due to receding gums or gum disease, underlying nerves will overreact to stimuli... causing pain.

What You Can Do to Minimize Tooth Sensitivity

- **Home Oral Care** – Brush with a soft-bristle brush twice a day using a toothpaste with fluoride (which helps repair enamel), and floss daily. Do not brush hard or use abrasive toothpaste. Also, if you grind your teeth, ask the doctor about getting a mouth guard to prevent wearing off your enamel or breaking your teeth.
- **Diet** – Avoid eating and drinking acidic food and drink, such as citrus fruit, carbonated beverages, cheese, wine and pickles... or rinse afterwards with water or milk to reduce acidity in your mouth.
- **Desensitizing Toothpaste and Strips** – Over-the-counter products that block the tubes in dentin are available. Use the toothpaste as you would regular paste, and apply the desensitizing strips the way you would use whitening strips. Both reduce pain, but strips work faster and get longer-lasting results.
- **Professional Fluoride Treatment** – In cases where the above remedies do not solve the problem, we may recommend applications of fluoride to strengthen the enamel... either applied by the doctor or at home using prescription fluoride.
- **Desensitizing Root Coating** – When the pain is occurring below the gum line, the doctor may apply a resinous material to root surfaces, sealing them.
- **Restoring Gum Tissue** – If gum loss has exposed roots, surgically transplanting gum tissue from elsewhere in the mouth can cover and protect them.
- **Root Canal Therapy** – This is the ultimate solution for persistent sensitivity and pain. The nerves are removed from inside the tooth and the canal is sealed. No nerves mean no pain.

We'll be happy to answer any questions about what you or our practice can do about sensitive teeth.