

SensitiveTeeth

The reasons to treat sensitive teeth

One of the most common problems in dentistry is sensitive teeth. If you have sensitive teeth, you may feel discomfort when they are exposed to cold air, hot or cold food and beverages, or sweets.

Left untreated, tooth sensitivity can have far-reaching effects. Sometimes it stops people from properly brushing and flossing. This can lead to more sensitivity, decay, infection, and even loss of teeth and jawbone.

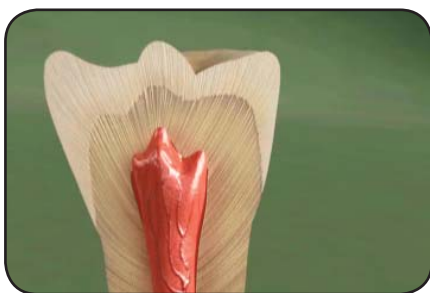
With proper treatment and care, your sensitive teeth can once again be healthy and comfortable.

The causes of sensitive teeth

There are many possible causes, including improper stresses on teeth, loss of the tooth's protective enamel layer, and occasionally some dental procedures.

One of the major sources of improper stresses is the unconscious habit of grinding and clenching the teeth. Another source of stress occurs when teeth do not come together properly. Some teeth always hit sooner than the rest, and they become sensitive.

Teeth also become sensitive when they lose their protective outer layer which exposes the dentin. The dentin is the middle layer of the tooth, and it is normally protected by enamel (above the gumline) and cementum (below the gumline). Dentin contains millions of tiny tubes that extend from the nerves at the center of the tooth to the outer layer. When the dentin is exposed, these tubes are left open. Any stimulation at the surface of the dentin is transmitted through the tubes to the nerves, causing pain.



Tubes, dentin and pulp chamber



Desensitizing oral care products

The dentin can become exposed through various processes, such as abfraction, erosion, and abrasion. Abfraction occurs when one tooth hits sooner than the rest, causing the tooth to flex. Over time, this continual flexing causes the enamel to separate from the dentin.

Erosion occurs when acids dissolve the enamel. This is often caused by the frequent sipping of acidic soft and sports drinks or exposing the teeth to stomach acids through acid reflux disease or bulimia.

Abrasion takes place when the protective layer is worn away. This can happen when you brush too hard, use a medium- or hard-bristled toothbrush, or use an abrasive "tartar-control" or "whitening" toothpaste. Lastly, some dental procedures, such as bleaching and placing restorations, may sometimes lead to short-term sensitivity.

Diagnosis and treatment

To determine the cause of your tooth pain, we do a thorough examination. Then we perform the most appropriate treatment for the situation.

Short-term sensitivity can often be handled by using a desensitizing toothpaste or mouthwash.

If the problem is improper stress on teeth, we may adjust your bite or recommend that you wear a mouthguard. If the problem is exposed dentin, we may present a plan for improved brushing techniques, counsel you about your diet, treat the area with fluoride, or apply a protective coating, bonding agent, or restoration.