

# Teeth Trauma: It's a Sensitive Issue

You're not imagining it. That sudden twinge of pain in one or more of your teeth can, in fact, be caused by something as simple as a blast of wind, a bite of something fresh from the oven, or (what was supposed to be) a cool, refreshing treat.

You may have sensitive teeth, and if so, the problem could be here to stay. What does this mean and what can you do about it? It depends on a number of things.

## How to Tell if You Have Sensitive Teeth

First, you should determine whether the pain is truly due to tooth sensitivity, or something else entirely. A trip to the dentist will let you know for sure, but here are some things you can do to see if sensitivity is most likely to blame:

1. Take recent dental work into consideration: cleanings or invasive procedures can aggravate the teeth and gums, and result in temporary discomfort that should go away in a short period of time.
2. Check your teeth for new cavities: if the area where you experienced pain can easily be examined, grab a mirror and scan the section for visible holes or pits that could indicate an untreated cavity that may be the source of the problem.
3. Make sure existing fillings are intact: inspect prior work for any cracks, or fillings partially or completely removed. A deeper filling that has been damaged may cause nerve irritation and result in more noticeable pain.
4. Check your gums for recession: if you notice that your gums are receding this could be contributing to you sensitivity. When the



porous root surface of a tooth is exposed it is more susceptible to temperature and air.

## Ways to Ease the Pain

If tooth sensitivity is ultimately the problem, there are plenty of things you can do to help manage it. Minimize your discomfort by making these changes:

- Limit intake of acidic foods and beverages, such as citrus fruits and sodas
- Switch to a soft-bristled toothbrush, and apply less pressure when brushing
- Quit using over-the-counter mouthwash; ask your dentist for a more neutral rinse
- Try toothpastes made for sensitive teeth, and see which option works best for you
- Use a mouth guard at night if you have a habit of grinding your teeth
- Brush and floss regularly to keep enamel-eroding plaque at bay
- Switch to an electric toothbrush, which is more gentle on your gums

## Get Help from Your Dentist

See your dentist regularly to stay on top of the issue. Regular, professional cleanings and examinations will go a long way in keeping the problem from getting worse.

Certain in-office treatments may further ease your pain, such as:

- Fluoride varnishes: An application that strengthens and protects exposed enamel
- Fluoride foam/gel trays: An immersion of teeth in a concentrated dose of fluoride
- Sealants: A bonding material acts as a barrier and seals off the dentin of your teeth

If you've modified your habits, but still experience major discomfort after a period of time, ask your dentist whether these options are right for you.

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