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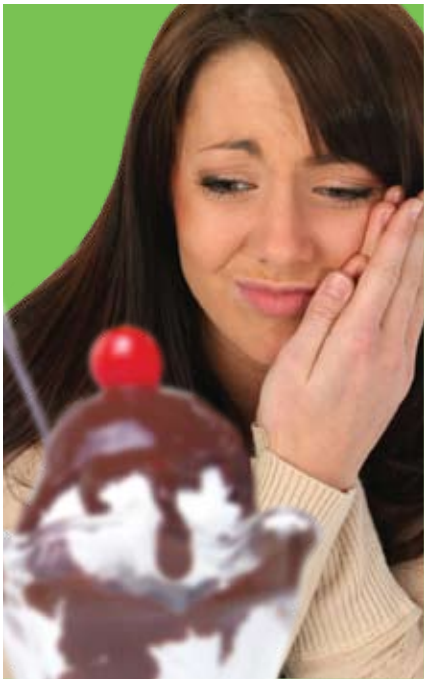
AGD.FACTSHEET PATIENT

Compiled for you by the Academy of General Dentistry



SENSITIVE TEETH

Why are my teeth sensitive?

Exposed dentin is the likely reason. Dentin is the tissue that makes up the core of each tooth. Dentin is covered by a protective coating of enamel. When this enamel wears away or decays, the dentin becomes exposed and receptive to sensations, including pain. Dentin exposure and sensitivity also occur when roots are exposed due to gum recession.

When does tooth sensitivity usually occur?

You may experience tooth sensitivity, or dentin hypersensitivity, after eating cold or hot foods, drinking cold or hot liquids, or breathing cold air.

What causes dentin hypersensitivity?

Causes of dentin hypersensitivity include brushing too hard, which wears away enamel, and gum disease. Other causes include cracked or chipped teeth and grinding or clenching your teeth. Medical conditions like bulimia also may lead to exposed dentin. Your diet may play a role as well. Consumption of acidic foods and drinks, such as citrus fruits and carbonated beverages, can chemically dissolve enamel over time, resulting in exposed dentin.

What can increase dentin hypersensitivity?

Some toothpaste brands contain abrasive ingredients that may wear away enamel. Ingredients found in some whitening toothpastes and bleaching treatments may increase tooth sensitivity as well.

How do I know when it's time to see a dentist?

If your teeth are highly sensitive for more than three or four days and they react to hot and cold temperatures, it's best to get an evaluation from your dentist.

How does a dentist determine dentin hypersensitivity?

A dentist can gauge the severity of your sensitive teeth by using an air test. The dentist sprays air across each area of your teeth to pinpoint the exact location of sensitivity.

What can the dentist do to treat dentin hypersensitivity?

Your dentist will examine your teeth, look for causes of sensitivity, and make treatment recommendations. If sensitivity is associated with clenching and/or grinding, your dentist may recommend a mouth guard.

Dentists have a variety of treatments for dentin hypersensitivity. Products for home use include desensitizing toothpastes and mouth rinses. In-office procedures include application of desensitizing agents or protective sealants.

What can I do to improve tooth sensitivity?

Practice good oral hygiene to maintain healthy teeth and gums. Use a soft-bristled toothbrush and avoid brushing your teeth too hard. And watch what you eat: Avoid acidic foods and drinks.

Do you have questions about dental health?

At the AGD's Web site, you can search more than 300 oral health topics, post a dental question, sign up for e-newletters, find an AGD dentist, and more.

Visit us at *www.agd.org.*

Sensitive teeth is one of the most common complaints by dental patients.

RESOURCES

www.agd.org

At the AGD's Web site, you can search more than 300 oral health topics, post a dental question, sign up for e-newsletters, find an AGD dentist, and more.

1.877.2X.A.YEAR

AGD's toll-free referral number. Call to locate an AGD member dentist in your area.

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