

Sensitive Teeth



What is dentin hypersensitivity?

Dentin hypersensitivity, more commonly referred to as sensitive teeth, can be defined as short, sharp pains that come from exposed dentin (the layer beneath the outermost enamel). Individuals with sensitive teeth may find that pain can be triggered by hot, cold, sweet or sour beverages or foods, brushing or flossing, or even cold air.

What causes the sensitivity?

Tooth sensitivity is caused by the movement of fluid within tiny tubes (pores) located in the dentin, which results in nerve irritation. When the hard, outer enamel of a tooth is worn down or gums have receded, the surfaces of these tiny tubes can become exposed, resulting in pain.

Factors that contribute to sensitive teeth:

- Aggressive brushing
- Acidic foods and beverages
- Gum disease
- Certain toothpastes and mouthwashes
- Tooth whitening products
- Plaque
- Broken or cracked teeth
- Bulimia and acid reflux
- Routine dental procedures

Tips for reducing tooth sensitivity:

- Switch to a desensitizing toothpaste (e.g., Sensodyne). Use twice a day and do not rinse out your mouth with water afterwards.
- Only use a soft-bristled toothbrush, which are much gentler on your teeth and gums.
- Practice good oral hygiene to prevent plaque build-up and gum disease.
- Avoid highly acidic foods and beverages, as these can wear down or dissolve the enamel.
- Avoid whitening toothpastes and mouthwashes.
- Avoid toothpastes with baking soda, peroxide, or sodium pyrophosphate (a key ingredient in tartar-control toothpastes).

Talk to Drs. Heubner or Camp the next time you are in our office.

If you follow the above tips and still experience sensitivity, we may be able to treat the teeth by applying protective sealants, desensitizing agents, or topical fluoride. If the sensitivity is being caused by a cavity or cracked tooth, a filling or crown may be needed. If receding gums are the cause, we may recommend a surgical gum graft to cover and protect the tooth root.