

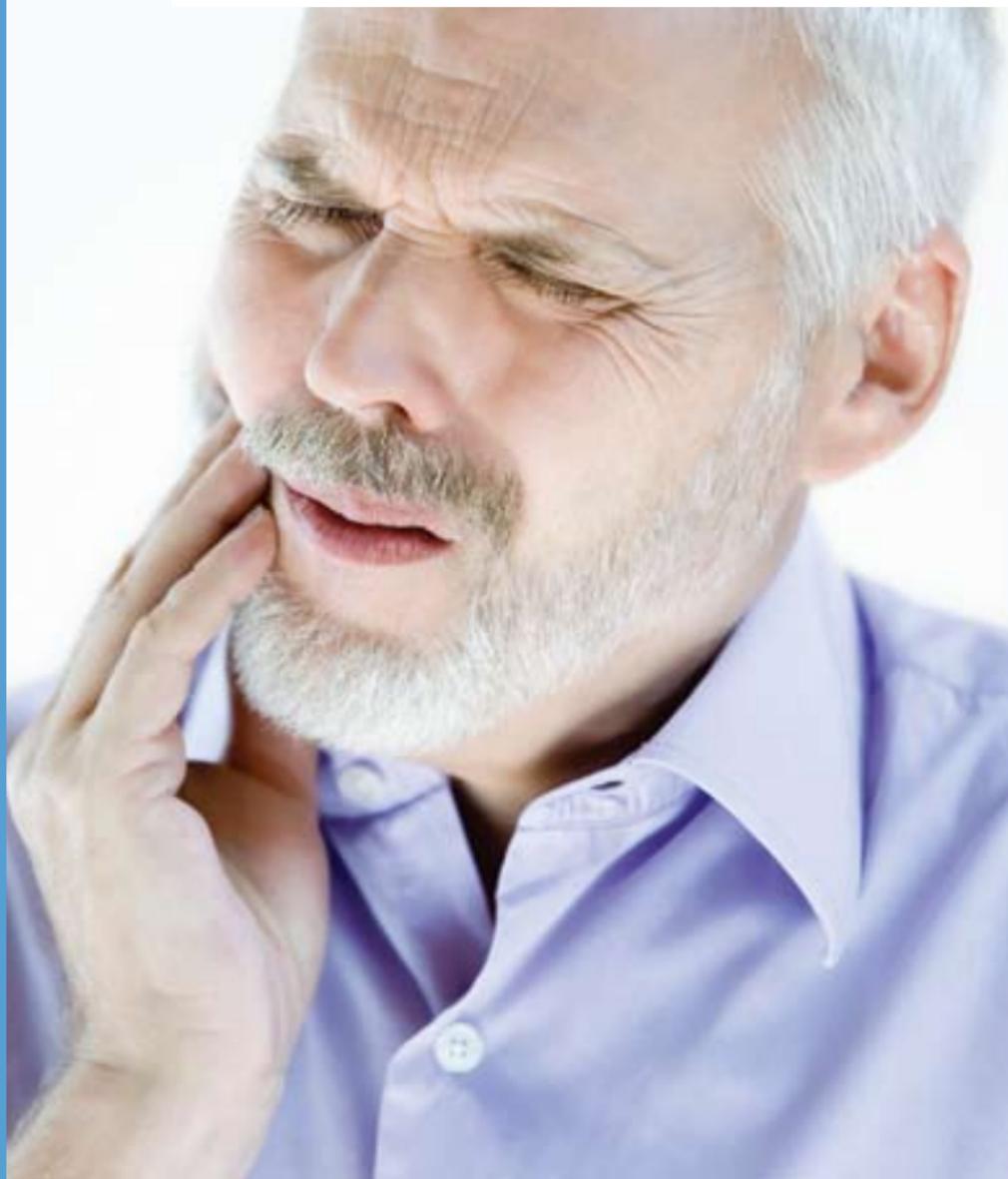
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Are Your Teeth a Sensitive Subject?

A patient's guide to sensitive teeth
and better oral care



Academy
of General Dentistry™

THE LINK BETWEEN SENSITIVITY AND TOOTH EROSION

You may have noticed that many of the causes of dentin hypersensitivity are directly related to tooth erosion. Things like brushing too hard, drinking sports drinks, and having acid reflux can all wear down the enamel, causing your teeth to erode. That's why early detection is so important. The sooner a patient can recognize the signs of tooth erosion, the more likely it is that he or she will prevent other oral health conditions, such as dentin hypersensitivity.

SIGNS OF TOOTH EROSION

- **DISCOLORATION**
Teeth may become slightly yellow in color as they begin to erode.
- **TRANSPARENCY**
Front teeth may appear transparent on the biting edge.
- **CRACKS**
Small cracks or roughness may appear along the edges of your teeth.
- **ROUNDED TEETH**
Your teeth may have a rounded or “sand-blasted” look.
- **CUPPING OF THE TEETH**
The chewing surface of your teeth may reveal small dents.

WHAT CAN I DO TO REDUCE SENSITIVITY?

Oftentimes, patients will try to manage tooth sensitivity by staying away from certain hot or cold beverages, or even avoiding the sensitive area of the mouth while brushing. And while these methods may seem like the quickest and easiest ways to prevent sensitivity, none of them will actually solve the problem.

The good news is that there are many things a patient can do at home to reduce tooth sensitivity—and none of them involve taking away ice cream!

TIPS FOR REDUCING TOOTH SENSITIVITY: SWITCH TO A DESENSITIZING TOOTHPASTE

There are many brands of toothpaste available that are specifically made for sensitive teeth. These can be found at your local pharmacy. With regular use, you will notice a decrease in sensitivity after a couple of weeks.

USE A SOFT-BRISTLED TOOTHBRUSH

When you use a hard- or medium-bristled toothbrush, you may be wearing away the enamel on your teeth or causing your gums to recede. Soft-bristled toothbrushes are much gentler on your teeth and gums.

PRACTICE GOOD ORAL HYGIENE

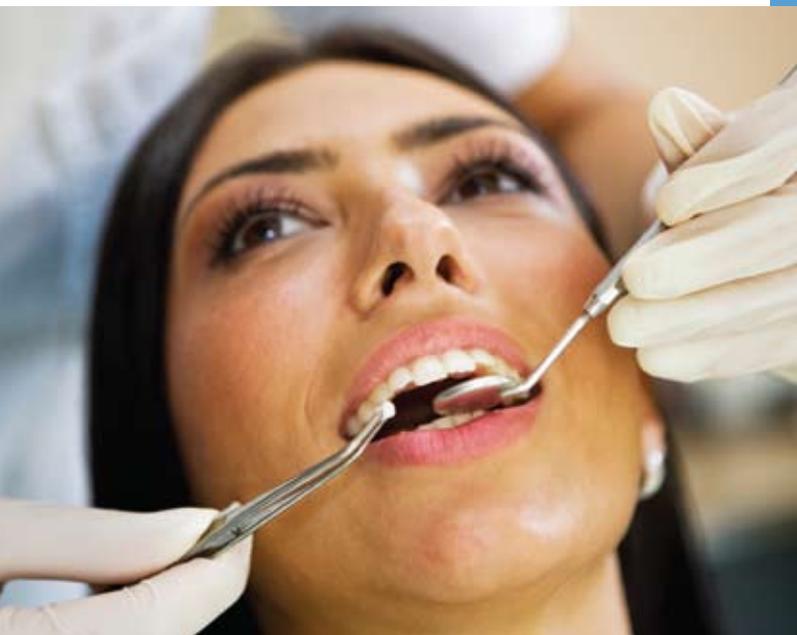
Practicing good oral hygiene is very important when it comes to protecting your teeth. Floss regularly and brush your teeth at least twice a day—especially after meals!

AVOID HIGHLY ACIDIC FOODS AND BEVERAGES

Make a conscious effort to limit your intake of highly acidic foods and beverages. Acidity can gradually dissolve tooth enamel, leaving the dentin exposed.

TALK TO YOUR DENTIST

If you experience dentin hypersensitivity, talk to your dentist. He or she may be able to treat sensitivity by applying protective sealants, desensitizing agents, topical fluoride, fillings, or crowns. If sensitivity has occurred due to receding gums, your dentist may recommend a surgical gum graft to cover and protect the tooth root.



PROPER BRUSHING TECHNIQUE

As simple as it sounds, many patients do not know the best way to brush their teeth. Even people who brush several times a day may be doing their teeth more harm than good—especially if they are brushing too hard! Aggressive tooth brushing can wear down the enamel and gum line over time, sometimes causing irreversible damage.

A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO PROPER TOOTH BRUSHING



STEP 1

Apply a pea-sized amount of toothpaste onto the bristles of your toothbrush. In general, soft-bristled brushes are recommended over medium- or hard-bristled ones.

STEP 2

Place the toothbrush beside your teeth at a 45 degree angle and begin brushing in a circular motion; use short and gentle strokes.



STEP 3

Continue this pattern on the outside of your teeth, inside of your teeth, the chewing surfaces of your teeth, and between teeth. Pay careful attention to your gum line. Using a back-and-forth motion can cause the gum surface to recede, making the root surface tender.



STEP 4

Gently brush your tongue to remove bacteria and freshen breath.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: How is dentin hypersensitivity diagnosed?

A: Dentin hypersensitivity is often diagnosed after a patient complains of sensitivity or pain in one or more teeth. Patients typically complain about sensitivity when eating cold or hot foods or when pressure is put on the tooth. Dentists may also notice sensitive areas of the mouth when performing a routine check-up.

Q: When should I see my dentist about sensitive teeth?

A: If you are experiencing sensitivity for more than three or four days, see your general dentist. The pain you are feeling may or may not be caused by dentin hypersensitivity. That's why it is important to discuss your symptoms as soon as they occur. It may save your teeth!

Q: How does a desensitizing toothpaste work?

A: Desensitizing toothpastes protect the dentin by blocking the tiny tubes that connect to the inner nerve center of each tooth. When these passageways are blocked, the nerve center is sheltered from feeling sensations.

WHAT MAKES AN AGD DENTIST A GREAT DENTIST?

A dentist who belongs to the Academy of General Dentistry (AGD) is one of 35,000 dentists dedicated to continuing their dental education to provide the best possible care to their patients.

An AGD dentist:

- Must complete at least 75 hours of continuing dental education every three years.
- Is educated and trained in all areas related to the diagnosis, treatment, and management of a patient's oral health.
- Is up-to-date on the latest dental procedures and technologies.
- Is dedicated to educating and enabling you to make the most informed dental health choices.



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