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Sensitive Teeth: Causes, Symptoms, Treatments

Sensitive teeth occur when the enamel that protects the tooth's surface becomes thinner or wears away. This exposes the underlying dentin, which contains small tubes that lead to the tooth's nerve center. When exposed to hot or cold temperatures, acidic foods or sugary foods, or brushing, it can trigger pain or discomfort.

Sensitive Teeth

Wondering why your teeth are sensitive? There are several possible causes of sensitive teeth, including tooth decay, worn tooth enamel, exposed tooth roots, gum disease, and damaged teeth. Symptoms of sensitive teeth can include sharp pain when eating or drinking hot or cold foods, pain when brushing or flossing, and pain when eating sweet, acidic, or sticky foods.

Although it is common, having sensitive teeth can be frustrating. If your teeth feel sensitive, or you are experiencing sudden tooth sensitivity, you might want to know what's causing it. In this article, we will discuss what causes sensitive teeth, the symptoms, and the treatments available for sensitive teeth.

What Causes Sensitive Teeth?

There are several factors that can contribute to the development of sensitive teeth. One of the most common causes is tooth decay or cavities. This can lead to the erosion of tooth enamel and expose the dentin. Gum disease, which causes the gums to recede, can also expose the tooth roots and lead to sensitivity.

Teeth grinding, or aggressive tooth brushing can also contribute to tooth sensitivity. Other factors that can cause sensitivity include cracked or chipped teeth, worn fillings, and teeth whitening treatments. It is important to identify the underlying cause of tooth sensitivity in order to determine the appropriate treatment.

Sensitive Teeth Symptoms

Sensitive teeth can cause sharp, sudden tooth pain or a dull, constant ache. Hot or cold foods and drinks, sweet or sour foods, and even breathing in cold air can all cause tooth sensitivity. The discomfort may occur in one or more teeth and can be mild or severe depending on what's causing it.



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SMILE DESIGNS

Teeth Sensitivity to Cold

The most common symptom of sensitive teeth is pain or discomfort when consuming hot or cold foods and drinks. This happens when the enamel of a tooth has worn down, which exposes the nerve. This layer of the tooth is sensitive to temperature changes, and can cause pain when exposed to heat or cold.

Pain While Brushing or Flossing

Another symptom of sensitive teeth is experiencing pain while brushing or flossing. This type of sensitivity can be a sign that you are brushing too hard or using a toothbrush with hard bristles. It can also be a sign of gum recession.

Sensitivity to Air or Cold Weather

People with sensitive teeth may also experience sensitivity to cold weather or cold air. This can cause discomfort or pain in the teeth and gums, and may be more noticeable during the winter months. If you experience sensitivity to air or cold weather, talk to your dentist to determine the cause and get treatment.

Risk Factors for Sensitive Teeth

Receding Gums

Receding gums is one of the most common causes of tooth sensitivity. Gum recession occurs when the gums pull back from the teeth. When this happens, it exposes the sensitive root surfaces. This can lead to sensitivity to hot, cold, and sweet foods and beverages.

Tooth Decay

Tooth decay is another risk factor for sensitive teeth. When left untreated, it can lead to cavities that expose the sensitive inner layers of the tooth. This can cause pain and sensitivity to hot, cold, and sweet foods and beverages.

Teeth Grinding

Teeth grinding (bruxism), can cause tooth sensitivity. The constant grinding puts pressure on the teeth, which can wear down the enamel and expose the dentin. When this happens, gums recede and teeth become more and more sensitive overtime.



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SMILE DESIGNS

Treatments for Sensitive Teeth

Dental Bonding

Dental bonding is a great way to protect enamel from extreme temperatures, such as cold or hot food and drinks. Cosmetic tooth bonding is a procedure that involves applying a layer of composite resin to the enamel. This bond acts as a barrier to eliminate tooth sensitivity by keeping the enamel safe from extreme temperatures. The material is safe, natural looking, and can even match the tooth color of your teeth for seamless aesthetics.

Gum Grafting

Gum grafting is a solution for tooth sensitivity caused by receding gums that is permanent. The procedure builds up the gum tissue to cover the sensitive parts of your teeth. It also evens out the gum line helping with esthetics. Because surgical gum graft treatments are for the more severe cases, getting a proper diagnosis is key.

Treating Tooth Sensitivity

You can treat sensitive teeth, but the type of treatment will depend on what's causing it. While you can address mild tooth sensitivity with a desensitizing toothpaste, more severe cases will require a more complex treatment. For example, chipped teeth and worn fillings both require restorative dental treatment. If your tooth sensitivity is getting progressively worse, schedule an appointment to get the care you need.