



Factsheet

Sensitive teeth

Tooth sensitivity is discomfort or pain from one or more teeth when they are exposed to a stimulus. It will usually go away once the stimulus is no longer in the mouth.

Common causes

- Tooth erosion
- Teeth grinding or clenching teeth
- Gums pull back from the teeth to expose the root surfaces
- Developmental conditions affecting the teeth, for example, enamel hypoplasia

What is a stimulus?

A stimulus is an item that contacts the tooth to cause pain. A stimulus may include:

- hot foods or drinks
- cold foods or drinks
- cool air
- gentle touch, for example from a toothbrush

Ways to prevent sensitive teeth

- Brush your teeth gently. Pressing harder does not make the teeth cleaner.
- Keep good oral hygiene to prevent gum disease which can cause the gums to pull back from the teeth.
- Do not drink sugary or acidic drinks regularly. This includes soft drink, fruit juice, energy drink, sports drink, kombucha, and lemon water.
- Drink water after eating or drinking acidic foods or drinks to rinse them from your mouth.
- Do not brush your teeth straight away after drinking sugary or acidic drinks, after reflux or after vomiting. **Wait 60 minutes before brushing.**
- See your dentist regularly so they can check for issues that may make teeth sensitive.

Can sensitive toothpaste help?

Sensitive toothpaste can help sensitive teeth. Special ingredients are added to these toothpastes to treat sensitivity. There are two ways these toothpastes work:

- The nerves inside the teeth are soothed by the toothpaste so they do not cause pain.
- The toothpaste makes a barrier over the area of the tooth that is sensitive.

These toothpastes will not help if a sensitive tooth is caused by tooth decay. This needs to be treated by a dentist.

