

WHAT IS TOOTH SENSITIVITY?

What is tooth sensitivity?

Tooth sensitivity is the pain you may feel when you eat or drink hot or cold foods or drinks. You may also feel pain when you breathe in cold air.

Sensitivity can happen when gums pull away from the teeth or when gum tissue is lost. **Gum loss** can occur as a result of gum disease, brushing too hard, or not brushing and flossing regularly.

When gum loss occurs, the part of the tooth below the gumline can be exposed. This is called the **tooth root**. There are tiny tunnels that contain fluid and lead from the tooth root to the tooth's nerve centre. This nerve centre is called the **pulp**. When heat or cold touches these tunnels, the tooth fluid can excite the nerve, causing pain in your teeth.

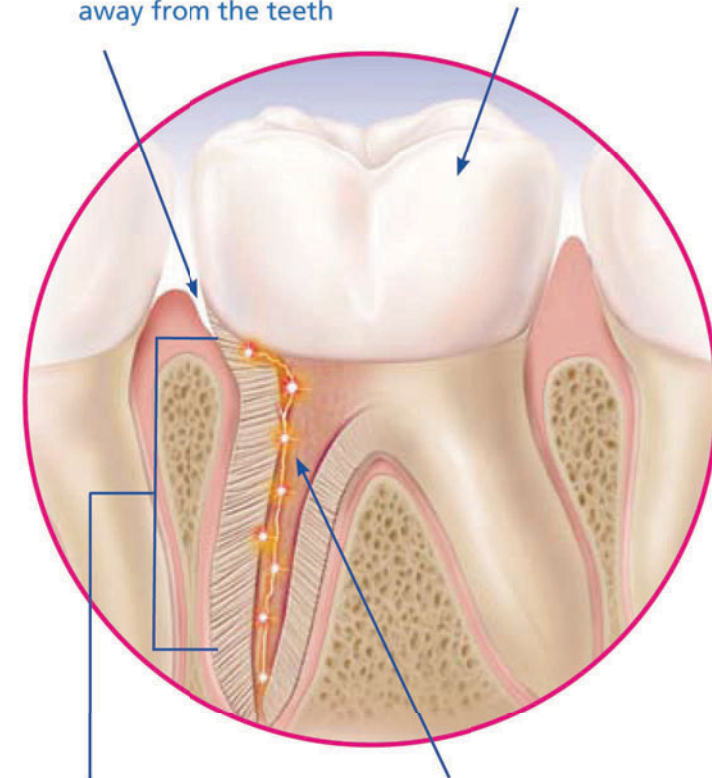
Sensitivity can also happen if the tooth's hard surface layer, called **enamel**, gets worn away.

Gum loss

Lost gum tissue or gum tissue that has pulled away from the teeth

Enamel

The hard surface layer of the tooth



Tooth root

The part of the tooth below the gumline

Pulp

The tooth's nerve centre



What is tooth sensitivity?

Tooth sensitivity can come and go. But ignoring it can lead to other health problems in your mouth.

These factors can contribute to tooth sensitivity:

- Brushing too hard or using a toothbrush with hard bristles
 - This can cause gum loss
- Sugary and acidic foods and drinks
 - Cola/soda, fruit juices, and sugary snacks can contribute to erosion, which may cause sensitivity
- Teeth grinding
 - This can wear down tooth surfaces
- Dental cleanings or treatments
 - Sensitivity can happen after dental cleanings or treatments like tooth whitening. It usually goes away shortly after treatment ends. But if you have any concerns, talk to your dental team

Here are some ways to help prevent sensitivity:

- Brush and floss your teeth twice a day to prevent gum disease
 - Be sure to clean all parts of your mouth, including between teeth and along the gumline
- Brush gently and use a toothbrush with soft bristles
 - This will help prevent gum loss and protect your enamel from being worn away
- Avoid acidic foods and drinks

If you still have sensitivity, talk to your dental team. They may have other suggestions.



Quick facts about tooth sensitivity

- Tooth sensitivity is the pain you may feel when you eat or drink hot or cold foods or drinks
- Sensitivity happens when gums pull away from the teeth or when gum tissue is lost. This exposes the tooth root below the gumline, resulting in sensitivity
- Use a toothbrush with soft bristles to avoid hurting your gums and teeth
- You can also ask your dental team about special toothpastes for sensitive teeth



For more tips on how to prevent sensitivity, talk to your dental team.