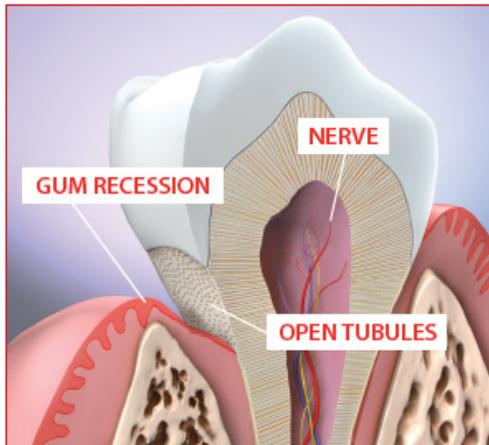


Tooth Sensitivity

Tooth sensitivity affects approximately half of the population. It is often experienced as a pain or an uncomfortable sensation triggered by sweet, sour, hot, or cold food and beverages. Some people even report sensitivity from our cold mountain air. Tooth sensitivity can be generalized (everywhere), or localized to certain areas of the mouth.

Causes of Tooth Sensitivity

Tooth sensitivity can come and go over a period of time and does not have to be constant. It usually presents as a sudden sharp pain that lasts for a few seconds. Most commonly, tooth sensitivity is caused by recession or wear on teeth that removes the outer enamel and exposes the dentin under it.



The outer enamel doesn't have nerves or feel any pain. The inner layer, the dentin, has nerves in it that feel pain. Small holes (pores) in the dentin allow hot, cold, and sweet things to irritate the nerves and cause pain and sensitivity. Anything that causes the inner dentin or the root to be exposed can lead to sensitivity (see list below).

Often when people have receding gums, they will experience sensitivity due to the exposure of the dentin layer on the root.

Contributing Factors to Sensitive Teeth

- Receding gums/Gum disease
- Brushing aggressively or with a medium or hard bristled brush
- Tooth decay
- Forces on the teeth: clenching/grinding/orthodontics
- Abrasive tooth paste
- Heavy plaque build up
- Acidic foods
- Tooth whitening
- Habits such as chewing on pens, nails, intra oral piercings
- Medical Conditions such as acid reflux or bulimia
- Age – tooth sensitivity is highest between 30-40

Prevention/Treatment of Tooth Sensitivity

- 1) **Maintain good oral hygiene** – Thorough removal of plaque.
- 2) **Tooth brush** - Always use a ultra soft or soft bristled toothbrush.
- 3) **Brushing Technique** – Review brushing technique with your dental health care provider to ensure you are not brushing too aggressively or scrubbing your gums.
- 4) **Electric Toothbrush** – These are great at preventing further recession and are very effective at removing plaque. We strongly recommend a Sonicare electric tooth brush. Sonicare has a tooth brush head made especially for sensitive teeth.
- 5) **Desensitizing tooth paste** – There are a number of these tooth pastes on the market targeted towards sensitive teeth. The active ingredients are Potassium Nitrate and Sodium Lauryl Sulfate, which “plug” the pores that allow hot, cold, and sweet things to irritate the nerve.
- 6) **Mi paste** – This helps to restore calcium phosphate in your teeth which strengthens enamel and dentin.
- 7) **Small fillings** – Dr. Foreman can assess if a small filling can be placed over the sensitive area.
- 8) **Monitor diet** – Try to eliminate acidic foods in the diet, as these can wear away the enamel quickly. Also, foods that trigger acid reflux/vomiting can wear away the teeth.
- 9) **Fluoride treatments** - Topical fluoride treatment are available at the dental office as well as in many over the counter dental products such as mouth rinses and tooth pastes.
- 10) **Avoid clenching/grinding** – You can get a custom made night guard made to protect the teeth at night from any forces from clenching or grinding.
- 11) **Visit the dental office regularly** – Our team at Banff Dental Care can provide a number of tests and exams to monitor for decayed teeth, and recession levels. They can provide oral hygiene education sessions and make home care recommendations specific to your needs. We can also provide fluoride treatments and can remove plaque and tarter build up with regular scaling and root planing appointments.

