

## Go Easy on Sensitive Teeth

Does drinking something hot or cold cause your teeth to screech in pain? What about eating something very salty, sweet, or acidic, or just brushing your teeth? If you are nodding your head, you may have sensitive teeth or “dentin hypersensitivity.” This is a condition when the enamel covering your teeth wears away enough to expose a sensitive layer called the dentin.



Your dentist is part of the National Dental Practice-Based Research Network, a group of dental practices that treat patients and also do dental research. For more information go to [www.nationaldentalpbrn.org](http://www.nationaldentalpbrn.org).



### How do dentists diagnose sensitive teeth?

- When you tell your dentist about the pain, they'll examine your teeth to see what is causing the pain and rule out anything serious, like a cavity.
- They may also spray air or cold water on your teeth to test their sensitivity.



### How do dentists treat sensitive teeth?

- Dentists may not agree on one particular treatment for sensitive teeth, but most don't recommend anything invasive.
- In a recent study, most dentists recommended a special toothpaste for their patients with sensitive teeth. The toothpaste helps block the pain. You can buy it over-the-counter.
- Many dentists also recommended that you get a fluoride treatment or varnish, which is done at the office.



### What makes you more likely to have sensitive teeth?

- In a study with 1,862 patients with sensitive teeth, most had exposed dentin or receding gums. This means the sensitive parts of their teeth weren't protected.
- Almost half of the patients had a filling or crown in the teeth that were sensitive.



### What to do if you have sensitive teeth

- See your dentist.
- Use a toothpaste or dental strips for sensitive teeth.
- Be gentle when you brush your teeth and use a soft toothbrush.
- Stop using tobacco products.
- Stop or cut back on whitening products.

#### References:

Kopycka-Kedzierawski DT, Meyerowitz C, Litaker MS, Heft MW, Tasgaonkar N, Day MR, Porter-Williams A, Gordan VV, Yardic RL, Lawhorn TM, Gilbert GH; National Dental PBRN Collaborative Group. Management of dentin hypersensitivity by practitioners in the National Dental Practice-Based Research Network. *Journal of the American Dental Association*. 2017;148(10):728-736.

Kopycka-Kedzierawski DT, Meyerowitz C, Litaker MS, Chonowski S, Heft MW, Gordan VV, Yardic RL, Madden TE, Reyes SC, Gilbert GH; National Dental PBRN Collaborative Group. Management of dentin hypersensitivity by National Dental Practice-Based Research Network practitioners: results from a questionnaire administered prior to initiation of a clinical study on this topic. *BMC Oral Health*. 2017;17(1):41.

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To ensure excellent dental care, the Network carries out its studies in real-world settings—like your dentist's office—with regular patients like yourself who volunteer to participate. The studies wouldn't be possible without the involvement of our wonderful patients.

**Thanks to everyone who participated in this and all of our studies!**