

Tooth Sensitivity Can Be a Real Pain in the Mouth

SEATTLE – July 1, 2024 – Enjoying a cold drink or an ice cream cone are just a couple of ways we make ourselves comfortable on hot summer days.

For a sizable portion of the population, though, indulging in ice-cold foods and beverages, or hot drinks on a cold winter day, can lead to unbearable teeth pain. Teeth sensitivity affects nearly an eighth of all Americans and can cause pain when eating or drinking. Some of the other causes of tooth sensitivity include:

- Overenthusiastic brushing
- Eating disorders
- Consuming high-acid food and drink
- Gum recession
- Smokeless or snuff tobacco

These can lead to either a loss of enamel or exposing the roots of your teeth, which can cause problems when consuming hot, cold, sweet or acidic foods and drinks. By working to fix this problem, you will make eating and drinking more enjoyable and comfortable.

“Treating tooth sensitivity is important not only for immediate pain relief, but also for maintaining good oral health and preventing future dental problems,” said Kyle Dosch, DDS, Delta Dental of Washington’s dental director and member dentist. “Sensitivity often indicates underlying dental issues such as enamel erosion, gum recession or tooth decay. Addressing the issue can help prevent further damage to the teeth and gums and promote better overall oral health.”

Fortunately, there are ways to prevent and treat sensitive teeth. Diagnosing tooth sensitivity starts with a visit to your dentist, who then will likely recommend trying some at-home treatment options for a month or so.

At-home treatment options include:

- Desensitizing toothpastes which include potassium salts. You’ll want to use these with a minimal amount of water and a soft-bristled toothbrush.
- Mouthwashes which contain potassium nitrate and fluoride.
- Waiting to brush your teeth at least an hour after consuming acidic food and drinks, including carbonated drinks, citrus fruits, alcoholic drinks, yogurt and dairy products.

To combat erosive agents inside of acidic food and drinks, dental professionals recommend drinking milk or water afterward or using a straw to avoid prolonged contact between the beverage and your teeth.

If these simple tips don't rid you of tooth sensitivity, your dentist may suggest office therapies such as applying potassium nitrate gel or sodium fluoride to soothe and protect sensitive areas. These are short-term solutions, however. Longer term solutions may include at-home use of a topical remineralization therapy like *Tooth Mousse*, or in-office procedures like dental bonding or gum surgery.

For those with continued tooth sensitivity, you'll want to schedule a follow-up visit with your dentist and continue to use at-home therapies to help keep the pain away. It's also important to follow oral hygiene recommendations including flossing daily and brushing at least twice a day for two minutes with a soft bristled brush and fluoride toothpaste.

For more information about oral health, visit Delta Dental of Washington's [blog](#).

About Delta Dental of Washington

Founded 70 years ago by Seattle area dentists who set out to revolutionize oral health care, an innovative program was developed to provide longshoremen's children access to dental care – and the concept of dental benefits was born. Today [Delta Dental of Washington](#), a not-for-profit, is the state's leading dental benefits provider covering nearly 4 million people statewide and beyond.

Through corporate philanthropy, oral health advocacy, and funding the [Arcora Foundation](#), Delta Dental of Washington plays a vital role in making dental care more equitable and accessible, increasing dental health education with an emphasis on youth, and expanding diversity at all levels within the dental profession. These collective efforts aim to improve oral health care in Washington so all people can enjoy good oral and overall health with no one left behind. Delta Dental of Washington is part of the Delta Dental Plans Association, consisting of 39 independent, affiliated member companies. For more information, visit: www.deltadentalwa.com.