

# Tooth Sensitivity

**C**racked teeth, lost teeth and decaying

teeth are among the complaints a patient may present to his or her dentist for treatment. Each of those oral health troubles comes with a list of options the dentist may use to fix it; for example, implants, fillings or bonding.

Although the most common patient complaint is sensitive teeth, no one desensitizing agent is ideal to manage this uncomfortable condition, according to an article in the March/April 2009 issue of *General Dentistry*, the Academy of General Dentistry's (AGD) clinical, peer-reviewed journal.

Dentin hypersensitivity is caused by both the loss down of tooth enamel covering the dentin and exposure of the root surface, which may expose the nerve endings inside the teeth or gum tissue. Common actions such as brushing too hard, using an abrasive toothpaste, drinking too many acidic drinks and grinding of the teeth all can contribute to a loss or flaking of enamel, which produces many uncomfortable effects on a person's oral health.

"Depending on its intensity, the increased sensitivity can affect eating, drinking, and breathing," says Sergio Lima Santiago, DDS, MS, PhD, one of the study's lead authors. "It can also hinder one's ability to control dental plaque effectively, which causes an increase in the probability that the patient will develop cavities."

Thankfully, treatment for this dental condition begins with a simple conversation with a dentist. Dentists have a variety of regimens to manage tooth hypersensitivity, including both in-office treatments and patient-applied products for home use.

"A dentist may prescribe a fluoride gel or over-the-counter desensitizing toothpaste," says AGD spokesperson Dave Tecosky, DMD, MAGD. "Sealants, other protective coatings and even fillings may help, which block transmission of sensation from the outside of the tooth to the nerve," Dr. Tecosky adds.

Source: AGD Publication

"However, all patients are different and what works for one may not work for another. Describing what a patient is feeling and when the sensitivity occurs is a great way to help the dentist decide on the right treatment plan."



#### How to treat sensitive teeth:

- Use desensitizing toothpaste
- Ask a dentist to apply sealants or other filling materials, such as fluoride
- Decrease intake of acid-containing food and drink
- Avoid using hard-bristled toothbrushes and brushing teeth too hard