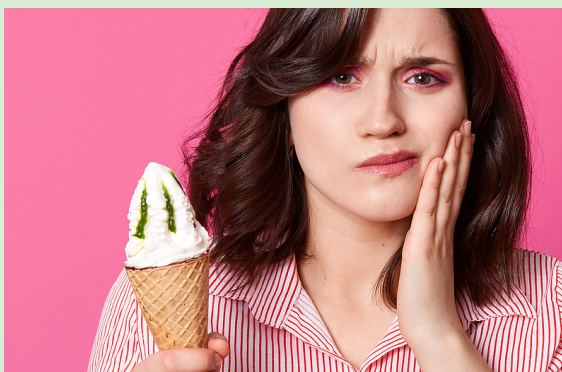


## What is dentine hypersensitivity?

- Dentine hypersensitivity (or simply sensitive teeth) is a common, usually short-lasting condition resulting in short and sharp pain when the exposed dentine is stimulated i.e. with cold. This pain goes away when the stimulus is removed.
- The stimulus causing sensitivity can be cold, air, acid, sweet foods/drinks, or touch.



## What is happening to your teeth?

- Dentine makes up the bulk of the tooth and contains tiny tubules which run from the pulp (containing nerves) in the centre to edge of the tooth. If tubules are exposed, this allows hot, cold or acidic food to stimulate the nerves inside the tooth and cause pain.
- This explains why some people feel discomfort when drinking cold/hot drinks, chewing and in certain cases, while breathing while others may only experience it when a dentist or hygienist tries to clean their teeth.



## Did you know?

- Around 40% of people suffer from dentine hypersensitivity.
- Changing your diet and brushing habits can help. Brush before meals and see your dental professional for advice.
- Frequent acidic food and drinks should be avoided, and any form of gastric reflux checked to prevent progression of sensitivity.
- Try readily available sensitive toothpastes and mouthwashes to help reduce sensitivity. Visit your dentist regularly to ensure no underlying causes are present.



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More information on gum health and periodontal disease can be found at: [bsperio.org.uk/patients](https://bsperio.org.uk/patients)  
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# Managing sensitive teeth



*Causes and treatment options*

## Who can get dentine hypersensitivity?

**Anyone! But some people can be more susceptible than others.**

### The general causes for sensitive teeth include:

- An acidic diet combined with excessive toothbrushing.
- Advanced gum disease (periodontitis).
- Treatment of gum disease (recession).
- Trauma of the gums from incorrect or aggressive brushing.
- Localised recession due to orthodontics/braces.
- Tooth whitening.
- A cracked/fractured tooth.
- Tooth wear/grinding your teeth.
- Regular vomiting or reflux.

### Do you have dentine hypersensitivity?

Here are some symptoms that you may notice and should raise concerns:

- Pain stopping you from frequently enjoying cold and sweet food and drinks.
- Pain when the dentist or hygienist is trying to scale clean your teeth.
- Pain when you are brushing your teeth.

### How to manage dentine hypersensitivity:

- Covering your mouth when you go outside to avoid cold on your teeth.
- If you are suffering any of the symptoms of sensitivity then it is advisable that you consult your dental practitioner for advice to find the best way to manage your condition.
- Depending on your extent and severity of dentine hypersensitivity, there are a number of different products and treatments available. Options vary between those that can be done at home and with the dental team.

### What can you do yourself?

- Brush and floss your teeth twice a day for 2 minutes including between your teeth.
- Avoid brushing excessively to minimise the damage to your teeth and gums.
- Use a toothpaste that is designed to help protect your teeth against sensitivity.
- Avoid or reduce the frequency of intake of acidic foods and drinks.
- Do not 'swish' or hold drinks in your mouth.
- Do not brush your teeth after eating or drinking anything acidic for at least 30 minutes.

If you have sensitive teeth:

- Rub a small amount of desensitising toothpaste to the affected area using your fingertip
- Do not rinse the toothpaste away
- Re-apply as required



### A case of severe toothwear leading to sensitivity



#### How your dental team could help

- Many oral conditions cause pain similar to dentine hypersensitivity, so it is important for your dentist to rule out other causes of pain.
- They may apply varnish or place a filling on the affected area.
- If the tooth remains sensitive your dentist may refer you to a specialist in periodontology.

#### What to expect after treatment

- You may experience an instant relief of pain which is great but it is important you continue with any advice and keep your condition under regular monitoring.
- Some sensitivity products can take longer to provide any noticeable benefit so persevere before considering other options straight away.

#### What if you don't treat it?

- The symptoms may worsen and continue.
- The degree of tooth wear and/or gum recession may also progress leading to greater discomfort.
- Dentine hypersensitivity often decreases with age.

#### Summary

- If dentine hypersensitivity is left untreated, it can lead to symptoms affecting your daily enjoyment of food and drinks
- It is important to understand the causes of dentine hypersensitivity and minimise your risks of it developing/worsening in the future
- A number of at home treatments exist and many are available over the counter
- Your Dentist, Hygienist or Therapist are the best people to ask for advice if you think you are experiencing symptoms

For more information about dentine hypersensitivity visit: [bsperio.org.uk/patients](https://bsperio.org.uk/patients)