

DENTAL HYPERSENSITIVITY

TO YOUR HEALTH - PATIENT EDUCATION HANDOUT

DESCRIPTION

Dental hypersensitivity is the heightened painful response of the teeth to thermal, chemical, and pressure stimuli due to irritation of the pulps (nerves) of the teeth. Most causes of dental hypersensitivity involve exposure of the dentin layer of the teeth, which is the layer beneath the tooth enamel.

Most commonly, irritation of the tooth causes a reversible pulpitis (irritated nerve), resulting in intense sensitivity, usually to cold, on the involved teeth.

COMMON CAUSES

- Bruxism (grinding and clenching)
- Oral habits (gum chewing)
- Acid erosion and eating disorders
- Gingival (gum) recession
- Toothbrush abrasion
- Abnormal tooth wear
- Recent dental care (temporary)
- Cracked tooth syndrome

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

Any treatment that treats symptoms and ignores the underlying cause will only provide temporary and/or incomplete pain relief.

Prolonged dental hypersensitivity may result in irreversible damage to the pulps of the teeth creating the need for more extensive restorative dental care.

TREATMENT

Successful treatment relies heavily on pinpointing the specific cause of irritation. In many cases, there are multiple causes. A complete dental examination will help determine the specific causes of dental hypersensitivity.

- Use a soft-bristled toothbrush and reduce the force applied when brushing.
- Control harmful habits such as bruxism with a night guard.
- Quit oral habits such as gum chewing.
- Minimize or eliminate acid foods and beverages from your diet.
- Consult with a medical provider concerning gastric acid reflux or eating disorders.
- Follow-up on specific sensitive teeth after dental treatment.
- Complete all recommended dental care.

SYMPTOM MANAGEMENT

- Fluoride supplements to rebuild damaged tooth structure.
- Using a toothpaste for sensitivity.
- Adhesive sealants applied to exposed root surfaces.
- Modification of restorative dental material and procedure choices to reduce post-op sensitivity risk.

NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF ...

- Symptoms persist, worsen, or new ones develop.

Student Health Center

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