Se nse Sensitivity
and
Think having sensitive teeth is just an inconvenience? Think again. When ice cream or frosty drinks come with an “ouch” factor, it’s time to tell your dentist. “Tooth sensitivity may be an initial marker for something more serious,” explains Dr. Harry Höediono, Past President of the Ontario Dental Association and a dentist in Kitchener, Ont.

Tooth sensitivity occurs when the protective enamel on the tooth is damaged or when receding gums or periodontal disease exposes the dentin at the roots. Explains Dr. Höediono: “Dentin is the material that makes up the part of the tooth below the gums, the tooth root, and is found under the tooth’s enamel layer. It is a much softer material than enamel and contains tubules, tiny tubes that connect to the tooth’s pulp or nerve chamber. When this material is exposed to the air, cold, acidic drinks or infected with decay, the tooth may exhibit signs of discomfort.”

Once you’ve spoken with your dentist and the major causes have been treated

Tooth Sensitivity 101
Your dentist needs to know if your teeth are sensitive because the causes can include:

• tooth decay or damage
• gum disease and recession
• tooth grinding

Tooth sensitivity is a pain and your dentist needs to know about it.
You should always tell your dentist if your teeth are sensitive to hot, cold or sweet, but Dr. Höediono says you should call your dentist at once if you experience any of these symptoms:

- **Your teeth are also sensitive to pressure.**
- **Your tooth sensitivity doesn’t decrease after using a desensitizing toothpaste for a few weeks.**
- **The pain from tooth sensitivity lasts longer than one hour.**
- **The gums around your sensitive teeth appear to be changing colour.**

**Fighting the “Ouch” Factor**

**Here’s how to help prevent tooth sensitivity:**

- Keep your teeth clean: plaque contains bacteria that irritates your gums and may lead to gum recession.

- Use a desensitizing toothpaste and fluoridated dental products.

- Use a toothbrush that won’t scratch tooth enamel or wear away gum tissue and brush gently using a circular motion.

- Use warm water when brushing your teeth to soften your toothbrush’s bristles.

- Reduce your intake of acidic foods and sugary snacks and drinks.

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