

## Problem Solvers 9 Tooth and Mouth Pain

Synonyms: Cuts, denture sores, tooth pain, yeast infections

Meta Description: Mouth pain can range from mild sensitivity to severe pain that wakes you up at night. What should I do for the pain until I can see the dentist?

Article Headline: My mouth hurts! What should I do?

Article DEK; Enclosed you will find common ways of treating mouthpain and strategies for preventing them from returning.

Tooth pain can be debilitating. In this article we will describe the most common types of pain and the reasons why you hurt. Lastly, we shall describe treatments and strategies to prevent them in the future.

My teeth are sensitive to hot and cold, what can I do:?

Teeth are made up of enamel and dentin(which has pores that lead to the nerve) and inside the tooth is a nerve that when irritated can cause sensitivity and pain. When enamel is abraded away or eroded away from soda, lemon juice, the sensitivity can be severe. The treatment is to first eliminate the source of irritation! Replace hard toothbrushes with soft bristle brushes. Use electric brushes such as Braun or Sonicare to further decrease this trauma.

Avoid soda and sugary drinks that can change the way the nerve reacts. Limit or eliminate high acid drinks to eliminate the carbonic acid (what gives soda it's fizz).

Use toothpastes that say "for sensitive teeth" as they contain medications that will plug up the small pores in the dentin and provide relief. These toothpastes can take 6-8 weeks of continuous use to fully help!

Ask your dentist for prescription strength fluoride products to brush on your teeth to seal the dentinal tubules and stop the pain. If the tooth is really sensitive and no cavities are present, the dentist can use dentin-desensitizing medicines to offer immediate relief. These may need to be reapplied several times but can provide significant relief quickly while waiting for the over the counter medicaments to work.

Lastly, see your dentist because sensitivity to hot and cold can be indicators of deep cavities that can be causing your nerve to be very sensitive. If you have severe lingering "pain" to cold, the nerve is dying and a root canal may be indicated. Root canal therapy is a technique where the tooth is opened up and the small nerve is removed and replaced with a rubbery material called "gutta percha" which will

allow you to retain the tooth and have no pain from the nerve. Contrary to popular belief, root canals don't hurt. Typically the dentist will prescribe antibiotics and or pain medication to calm the tooth down prior to performing the root canal. The tooth is anesthetized in the same manner as when they are to be extracted and most dentists perform these procedures and the filling for the tooth in a single visit.

What does it mean when there is pain to hot foods?

Pain to hot means that the nerve is dead and gases are building up inside the tooth. The treatment will also be to perform endodontic therapy or a root canal.

My tooth hurts to hot some times and cold sometimes-what does that mean?

When a nerve is dying it can have parts that are alive and parts that are dead or dying so the sensation can change.

My tooth hurts when I bite down! I get a sharp pain, what is that?

Pain to chewing is called "CTS" or cracked tooth syndrome. Teeth that are risk are teeth with previous large fillings or teeth where the bite has shifted due to trauma or extractions of other teeth.

How do you treat cracked teeth? Well, first of all some teeth cannot be saved. So when patients understand the treatment goals and all options are discussed, if the pain won't go away, the tooth should be removed and the socket grafted to prepare for an implant or a bridge.

Initial treatment for a cracked tooth would be to take out the old filling, look for the fracture and remove any cracked cusps and to desensitize the tooth and place a nice bonded filling. Next the tooth should be taken out of occlusion-given a vacation by grinding it down slightly so it can't hit in chewing! If the pain persists a root canal can be done. If the root canal doesn't stop the pain, the last thing a dentist can try is to shave the tooth down and place a temporary crown to see if this "splinting together of the tooth structure" can stop the fracture from flexing and stop the pain. So if all these steps have been done and pain exists, the tooth should be removed and options for replacement discussed.

What should you do now for a cracked tooth?

For cracked teeth, don't eat on that side, stop gum chewing, eating sticky foods like caramels, taffy, and any other food that requires you to squeeze down on the tooth. Make an appointment to see your dentist before it gets worse. If there is a hole in your tooth or a cusp has fractured off, you may go to the pharmacy where temporary tooth cements can be purchased to put over the area. Even placing wax or sugarless gum over the area carefully can protect it until you can see your dentist.

My tooth cracked in half and wiggles, what should I do? Don't try and pull the pieces as they may be attached tightly to the gums and can cause pain and bleeding upon removal. See your dentist or go to your local urgent care clinic as soon as possible.

I have pain from my dentures and they hurt like crazy-what do I do.  
Since dentures are made of a hard acrylic and gum tissues are soft, the abrasion can lead to denture or partial denture sores. Take out the offending denture and use warm saltwater rinses to decrease the pain. A teaspoon of salt with a glass of warm water will keep the area clean and will help dull the pain receptors. Dentures may need to be adjusted, relined, rebased or remade so see your dentist to evaluate the causes of the pain.  
Creams such as Orabase with benzocaine can be purchased from the pharmacy and will act as a Band-Aid over sores until the dental visit. Medicines such as Orajel and Ambesol may provide some instant relief as well.

Any sores that don't seem to go away or bleed easily or have irregular borders may be pre-cancerous or cancerous lesions that should be evaluated and perhaps biopsied to insure that no oral cancer is present.  
Mouth pain can be debilitating, it should be a red flag that it is time to get in to the dentist. Most dentists will see same day emergencies so there is little excuse for "watching and waiting" and hoping it will get better by itself- see your dentist!

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