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Treating Sensitive Teeth

It is normal to have sensitive teeth following periodontal therapy. This usually improved over time. It can improve more quickly by following these suggestions.

What Causes Sensitive Teeth?

A layer of enamel, the strongest substance in the body, protects the crowns of healthy teeth. A layer called cementum protects the tooth root under the gum line. Underneath the enamel and the cementum is dentin, a part of the tooth that is less dense than enamel or cementum.

The dentin contains microscopic tubules (small hollow tubes or canals). When the dentin loses its protective covering, the tubules allow heat and cold or acidic or sticky foods to stimulate the nerves and cells inside the tooth. This causes hypersensitivity and occasional discomfort. Fortunately, the irritation does not cause permanent damage to the pulp. Dentin may be exposed when gums recede. The result can be hypersensitivity near the gum line.

After periodontal surgery the more root exposure is present resulting in more tooth sensitivity.

Treating Sensitive Teeth

Desensitizing Toothpaste: Use desensitizing toothpaste, which contains compounds that help block transmission of sensation from the tooth surface to the nerve. Desensitizing toothpaste usually requires several weeks or a few months of use before the sensitivity is reduced. Common brand names are Sensodyne and Crest Sensitive.

Fluoride Gels: If the desensitizing toothpaste does not ease your discomfort, a fluoride gel can be prescribed. The fluoride gel strengthens tooth enamel and reduces the transmission of sensations from the exposed root surface to the nerve of the tooth. This is used daily after using toothpaste for sensitive teeth. Apply the fluoride gel with a brush and/or proxabrush. Be sure it is in contact with the exposed root surface. Leave it in place for 3-5 minutes. Spit out any excess. Do not eat or drink for at least 30 minutes after the application. This can be repeated several times per day.

Recalcitrant Paste: This is a product that helps to remineralize the tooth root. It can be used at the same time a fluoride gel is used. It is applied and used in the same manner as the fluoride gel. Apply to roots of teeth, spit out excess after 3-5 minutes. This can be repeated several times per day. Do not eat or drink for at least 30 minutes after the application.

Your sensitive teeth should improve with time. We are always happy to answer any questions or concerns you might have.