

Winter's chill pains sensitive teeth

As temperatures drop, people with sensitive teeth could experience increased pain.

When your teeth already hurt, exposing them to the cold winter air can be just as painful as eating and drinking hot and cold foods and beverages, according to the Academy of General Dentistry.

Suggested remedies:

- Have your dentist seal the sensitive area with cement or plastic.
- Apply a special fluoride gel prescribed by your dentist. It also may help to use a soft-bristled toothbrush to massage the gel onto your gums after brushing.
- Brush with an over-the-counter desensitizing toothpaste.

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Getting sick?

Change your toothbrush!

Toothbrushes can house a number of bacteria. At the onset of an upper respiratory infection, sinus infection or cold, get a new toothbrush. When you're feeling better, get another one. Change your toothbrush at least once a month when you are healthy.

Seniors face special oral concerns

Whether caring for original teeth or dentures, seniors face a range of special oral concerns, including root and tooth decay. The American Dental Hygienists Association recommends the following tips to seniors:

- If you have arthritis or limited use of your hands, try adapting your toothbrush for easy use. Insert the handle into a rubber ball or sponge hair curler; or glue the toothbrush handle into a bike grip. Toothbrush handles can be lengthened with a piece of wood or plastic.
- If you have dexterity problems and cannot use a manual toothbrush, try an electric toothbrush. Studies confirm that electric brushes are excellent plaque-removing devices and are extremely effective in stimulating gums. Dental floss holders also are available.
- If you have dentures, they should be brushed daily with a soft toothbrush or denture cleaning brush, using a commercially prepared denture powder or paste, hand soap or baking soda. Dentures should be brushed inside and out, and rinsed with cool water.
- Remaining natural teeth should be brushed twice a day and flossed daily.
- When not being used, dentures should be covered with water or a denture cleaning solution to prevent drying.

February is Children's Dental Health Month

Following these tips by the American Dental Association will help your children grow up to have strong, healthy teeth:

- Begin cleaning your baby's mouth during the first few days after birth. Wipe the baby's gums after every feeding with a damp washcloth or gauze pad to remove plaque.
- Never allow an infant to nurse continuously from a bottle of milk, formula, sugar water or fruit juice during naps or at night.
- Allow your child to chew only sugarless gum. Avoid lollipops and other sticky candy.
- Parents need to brush and floss their child's teeth as soon as they come in. Children can learn to do this for themselves at about age 7.
- Never dip a child's pacifier in any sweet liquids.
- If your local water supply does not contain fluoride, ask your dentist how your child should get it.

