

What are the causes of toothache and what are their symptoms? - Smile Solutions

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13 96 Isabelle Sayers 23 Jun 2016 What are the causes of toothache and what are their symptoms?
Toothache is one of the worst pains any patient can experience. Toothache treatment usually involves
a thorough clinical examination and diagnostic tests. When it comes to causes of toothache, there are
multiple possibilities, so the most important part of toothache treatment is to get the diagnosis right –
that is, to discover the source of the pain. Among the most common causes of toothache are decay,
infection, cracked teeth, grinding, gum recession and gum disease. Tooth decay (dental caries) is
usually caused by lack of brushing or flossing and poor oral hygiene. It can also be caused the
consumption of too much sugar or acid in food and drinks, resulting in a breakdown of tooth structure. If
decay is detected early, it does not usually present as painful. In most cases, dental caries can be
diagnosed and treated pain free! When the caries has progressed deeper into the tooth (and gets
closer to the nerve) it presents as toothache. The symptoms of tooth decay include: aching when eating
or drinking, sensitivity to cold or hot stimuli, dark spots on the teeth and bad breath. When caries is
detected, the dental clinician will most likely take an X-ray to confirm the presence of decay, see how
large the cavity is, and check for infection or other pathology. All of these factors, plus further tests and
clinical examination, will help determine the best course of treatment for the patient. Infection occurs
when there is decay, an impacted tooth (usually a wisdom tooth) or gum disease. It can sometimes be
detected visually (that is, through swelling of the face and/or neck, or by the sighting of an abscess) and
also with the presence of pain. Toothache caused by infection is most commonly described as
throbbing or persistent and intense pain. Patients may also have a fever and find that the pain does
sometimes dissipate if or when the abscess pops. The other symptoms of infection include pain when
eating and drinking, and sensitivity to hot and cold stimuli. If you suspect infection in your mouth, it is
important to seek advice from your dentist so that they can prescribe antibiotics (if required) to alleviate
your symptoms, and then treat you to prevent further infections. Cracking can happen to any tooth, but
it is most commonly seen in premolars and molars. It is usually a result of grinding or heavy biting, past
trauma or large fillings. The symptoms of a cracked tooth include: sharp pain when eating hot, cold or
sweet foods and drinks, and sharp pain when biting hard then releasing that pressure. Grinding , or
bruxism , is when the teeth are excessively clenched or ground. It is most commonly caused by stress
and occurs subconsciously (when patients are sleeping). Symptoms of bruxism are generalised

sensitivity to hot and cold stimuli, generalised toothache, facial pain, stiffness or pain in the jaw/ jaw joint. Dentally it presents with multiple worn or flattened, chipped, broken or loose teeth. A thorough check-up of the teeth and jaw structures will be able to determine if bruxism is the cause of your tooth pain. Gum recession occurs most commonly from brushing too hard or using a toothbrush that has abrasive bristles. Recession means that the gums have dropped around the teeth and the root surface becomes exposed. As the root surface does not have the same enamel coating as the rest of the crown, patients generally experience sensitivity to cold stimuli. If the root surface is continually scrubbed by the toothbrush, then the root surface can start to wear away also, resulting in “abrasion” (a type of wear that occurs from a mechanical force – in this case brushing). The main symptom of gum recession is sensitivity. Sensitive toothpaste can assist with reducing this sensitivity. If that doesn't work, your dentist can explain the treatments available to fill or cover up the exposed areas and thus stop further sensitivity. Gum disease is the inflammation and infection of the gums . It usually occurs due to suboptimal oral hygiene, but there are multiple exacerbating factors that contribute to the disease progression. Symptoms include: red, swollen, bleeding gums; bad breath; and loose teeth. A thorough clean will usually improve the condition of the gum and prevent discomfort/ pain. However, it should be noted that all treatment of gum diseases is ongoing. To attempt to prevent toothache, dentists recommend that you brush your teeth twice a day, floss regularly and attend regular dental appointments for cleaning and examinations. If you are experiencing symptoms of toothache or discomfort, contact Smile Solutions on 13 13 96 to organise an appointment at your earliest convenience. 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