

**Viral Infections:** Shingles is an example of a viral infection that can cause tooth pain.

**Nerve Diseases:** A condition called trigeminal neuralgia is associated with a sharp pain on one side of the face.

**Drug Abuse:** Methamphetamine abuse has been associated with tooth pain.

**Vitamin Deficiency:** Inadequate vitamin B12 has been associated with tooth pain.

## Jaw Pain

If you are experiencing dental pain more so in the jaw, mouth or gums, your pain may be caused by any of the following:

**Temporomandibular Disorders:** (TMD) cause pain in the jaw. The causes of TMD include chronic teeth grinding or clenching, and dislocation of the temporomandibular joint.

**Mouth Cancer:** Mouth cancer can cause numbness or pain in any part of the face, neck, or mouth. Other symptoms of mouth cancer include swelling, bumps, and eroded patches anywhere inside the mouth, bleeding anywhere in the mouth, and sores on the face or neck, or in the mouth that don't heal in a week or two.

**Malocclusion:** Malocclusion is the technical term for crooked teeth or an uneven bite. Severe malocclusion can cause pain in the jaw and in the muscles of the face, but most cases can be managed with braces and other orthodontic techniques.

**Impacted Wisdom Teeth:** If wisdom teeth don't have room to emerge correctly, they can become impacted, which causes dental pain in the gums and jaw. The pain from impacted or misaligned wisdom teeth in the upper back corners of the mouth can be similar to the pain in teeth from sinus pain.

Sometimes wisdom teeth erupt through the gum line and cause no problems, but often they cause pain and need to be removed. Wisdom teeth that come in at an angle to other teeth can promote tooth decay, as well as pain in teeth. Wisdom teeth that only partly erupt from the gum line raise the risk of infection. Be sure to see a dentist to have wisdom teeth evaluated.

## Treatment

Treatment depends on the cause of the pain you are having. The treatments for tooth pain may be as simple as improving your oral health care routine, or as complicated as oral surgery.

Treatment for throbbing pains also depends on what is causing the problem. If an infection is involved, your dentist will work to identify the source. Once that has been narrowed down, he or she can look at options like removing the infected tissue (for example, with a root canal).

**Broken Tooth or Cavity:** If you have a broken tooth or a cavity, a dentist can fix the problem with a crown or filling.

**Gum Disease:** Tooth pain due to gum disease may require a technique called "root planing," in which a dental professional numbs your gums so he or she can use a special tool to remove plaque build up from above and below the gum line.

**Severe Gum Disease:** If you have severe gum disease, a root canal may be needed to remove the decayed tissue within the tooth.

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**Dealing  
with  
Tooth Pain**

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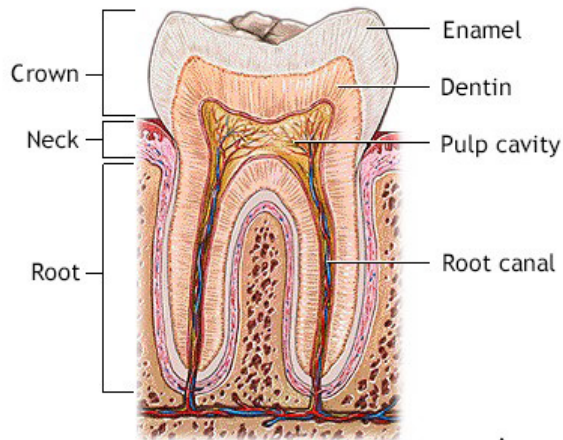
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Do you have tooth pain? Whether it's a short-lived, sharp, shooting pain or a prolonged, mild ache, you should see your dentist. (NOTE: There are other sources of oral pain that are not discussed here, like oral sores, earache, jaw pain, and headaches. Sometimes, pain that is felt in the tooth is actually due to pain in other parts of the body. This is called referred pain. For example, an earache may sometimes cause tooth pain. Your dentist also may be able to help with.) A toothache is pain in or around a tooth.



## Types of Pain

**Sharp pain:** You may feel a shooting pain when you eat or drink something hot or cold or sweet or sour. Pressure, like from toothbrushing or biting, also might spark this kind of pain.

Sharp pain might be caused by enamel damage like cavities, chips, or cracks, which might call for repair. You may need a new dental filling or crown. When the cementum is damaged exposing the dentin, topical varnish, which goes on as a liquid and then hardens to protect the exposed tooth roots, might be applied. Some things that may cause this short-lived pain reaction include:

- a cavity;
- a cracked tooth;
- an exposed tooth root.

Any of these can leave the inner portion of your tooth, called the pulp, unprotected. The pulp is your tooth's nerve and blood supply. In a healthy, undamaged tooth, the pulp is protected by 3 outer layers: enamel, cementum, and dentin.

Enamel is the part of the tooth that you see, and it connects to the dentin. Cementum also connects to the dentin, but it covers the tooth root.

Things that damage the enamel, like a cavity, chip, or crack, may cause tooth pain.

Anything that exposes the cementum also might set you up for pain. Cementum is softer than enamel. When it is left unprotected by the gums, it can be worn away easily.

Damage to the enamel or cementum may leave the dentin exposed, most often caused by gingival recession or enamel wear. The dentin directly connects to the pulp through tiny tubes or canals. exposure of the dentin may leave the pulp sensitive to things like changes in temperature, certain foods and beverages, or pressure.

**Dull, throbbing pain:** Sometimes dental pain involves an area in or around the mouth and jaw with a steady ache that goes on for days. This type of pain may indicate an infection.

## Dental Causes of Tooth Pain

**Tooth Damage:** Damage to the tooth is a common cause of tooth pain. For example, teeth that are chipped or broken due to trauma can cause tooth pain. Similarly, a broken or damaged filling, crown, or dental implant can contribute to tooth pain.

**Tooth Decay:** Tooth decay is one of the most common causes of tooth pain, and it has several degrees of severity. Cavities are holes in the teeth that penetrate the tooth enamel

and underlying dentin and which can lead to tooth pain. An Abscess, which is an infection of the nerve and pulp inside the tooth, is a more severe form of tooth pain.

**Gum Disease:** The symptoms of gum disease (periodontal disease) includes redness and swelling of the gums, but these symptoms can contribute to tooth pain, as well as gum pain. Dental pain from gingivitis may occur when plaque build up causes the gums to become red and swollen. Periodontitis can occur when gingivitis is left untreated, and the inner layer of the gums pulls away from the teeth, forming pockets that collect food debris and bacteria.

## Non-Dental Causes of Tooth Pain

Some causes of tooth pain are not directly related to your teeth. If you rule out more obvious sources of tooth pain, your pain could be associated with any of the following conditions:

**Sinus Pain Infection:** Sinus infections can cause pain in teeth when the pressure of fluid-filled sinuses creates pain in the upper back corners of your mouth. If you regularly suffer from sinus infections, you may notice pain in teeth located near the sinus cavities. To manage pain in teeth associated with sinus pain, ask your doctor for advice about decongestants or other medications to relieve sinus pressure.

**Cluster Headache:** The exact cause of cluster headaches is unknown, but pressure from a cluster headache has been associated with tooth pain.

**Heart Attack:** Pain from a heart attack can radiate into the lower jaw.

**Diabetes:** If you have diabetes, uncontrolled blood sugar can increase your risk for tooth decay.