

Cracked Tooth when a crack becomes a problem

Do You Have a Cracked Tooth?

When you bite down, you feel a sharp pain. Then it disappears and perhaps you ignore it. You may avoid certain foods or chew on the other side of your mouth. You may have a cracked tooth.

Causes of a Cracked Tooth

A tooth may crack due to many reasons:

- Chewing on hard objects or food such as ice, nuts or hard lollies
- An accident or blow to the mouth
- Grinding and clenching your teeth
- Uneven chewing pressure
- Stress on a tooth
- Loss of a large part of the tooth structure through wear, large filling or other restoration
- Exposing tooth to temperature extremes, for example, eating hot food and then drinking iced water
- Brittleness of tooth that has undergone endodontic (root canal) treatment



How to Tell if a Tooth is Cracked

This is often difficult. You may not be able to tell which tooth is hurting or whether the pain is from an upper or lower tooth. The crack may appear as a hairline fracture, running vertically along the tooth.

Cracks are often invisible to the eye and may not even show on an x-ray.

You can help the Dentist by taking note of when and where you feel the sensitivity. Do you feel sensitivity to hot, cold, sweet, sour or sticky foods?

Why a Cracked Tooth Hurts

A cracked tooth can hurt when the pressure of biting causes the crack to open. When you stop biting, the pressure is released and a sharp pain results as the crack quickly closes.

Even when the crack is microscopic, when it opens, the pulp or 'nerve' inside the tooth may become irritated and then become sensitive to temperature extremes. If the nerve becomes diseased or damaged as a result of the crack, root canal treatment may be necessary to save the tooth.

How is a Cracked Tooth Treated?

Tiny cracks in teeth are common and usually do not cause problems or require treatment. Other cracks will require treatment, depending on their size and location.

Possible Treatment

- Exploratory visit to determine extent of damage
- Diagnostic procedures to confirm presence of crack
- Replace lost tooth structure with bonded filling
- Root Canal Treatment
- A Crown
- Extraction in severe cases
- Wearing a splint or 'night guard'

Regular dental examinations are important in the early detection and treatment of cracks.

If you continue to have pain, we recommend avoid chewing on that side of your mouth and schedule a visit with the Dentist.