Tooth Sensitivity After a Filling: What to Expect | Core Dental

Canonical: https://www.coredental.com.au/tooth-sensitivity-after-a-filling/

Details:

Some sensitivity after a filling is common, because any time a tooth is drilled there is potential for post-operative sensitivity. The amount depends on how much work was done: a larger or deeper filling is more likely to leave the tooth tender, and the experience varies a great deal between people. Sensitivity to cold is the most common type. At Core Dental we explain what to expect and what to do if it does not settle, so please contact us if you are unsure.

Why might your tooth be sensitive after a filling?

Any time a tooth is drilled on, there is potential for post-operative tooth sensitivity. The extent of the sensitivity depends on the amount of work performed. The more extensive the work or the deeper the cavity, the greater the degree of sensitivity you may expect, and this range varies significantly from person to person.

Your dentist will usually tell you at the appointment how sensitive the tooth might feel, based on the size and depth of the filling. At Core Dental we encourage you to ask about this before treatment starts, so that a few days of tenderness do not come as a surprise.

What is the most common type of sensitivity after a filling?

The most common type of sensitivity following a filling is sensitivity to cold temperatures. You may notice a brief twinge when you drink something cold or breathe in cool air. Sensitivity to hot drinks or to sweet foods can also occur for some people.

If the sensitivity is mild and gradually easing, it is often part of the normal settling period. If it is sharp, constant, or getting worse rather than better, please let us know.

How long does temperature sensitivity after a filling usually last?

With a small to moderate-sized filling, temperature sensitivity usually subsides within a couple of weeks. If it lasts longer than two weeks it may still be normal for your individual circumstances, but it should slowly show signs of improvement over time. Larger or deeper fillings can take longer to settle than a small one.

If you notice no improvement at all, or the sensitivity is getting stronger, book a review so your dentist can examine the tooth. We would rather check a tooth that turns out to be fine than have you wait and worry.

What could cause sensitivity when you bite down after a filling?

Sensitivity when biting or chewing can be related to the occlusion (bite) of the tooth. When a filling is placed, an area may remain slightly high and contact harder against the opposing tooth. This can make the tooth sore and very sensitive to chewing after a few days.

You might notice that the tooth feels different when your teeth meet, or that it aches when you chew on that side. A filling that sits high is something we look for when you tell us about biting discomfort.

Is biting sensitivity after a filling a serious problem?

It is usually a quick and easy fix. A dentist can evaluate the filling and adjust the high spot promptly to resolve biting sensitivity. The adjustment is usually brief, and many people find the tooth feels more comfortable soon afterwards. Your dentist will examine the tooth first, because other causes of biting pain also exist, and they will explain what they find.

What should you do while the tooth settles?

General steps that many people find helpful include:

Choose lukewarm drinks and foods for a few days if cold or hot items trigger a twinge.

Chew on the other side of your mouth until the tooth feels comfortable.

Keep brushing and cleaning between your teeth gently, using a soft toothbrush. You can read more in our guide to 4 things to avoid if you have sensitive teeth .

Keep your follow-up appointment if one was arranged.

Your dentist may suggest other measures for your situation. Always follow the advice you were given at your appointment.

When should you contact us about sensitivity after a filling?

Contact us promptly if:

sensitivity lasts beyond a couple of weeks without improving

the tooth hurts when you bite down

the pain is severe, keeps you awake or does not settle

you notice swelling around the tooth or gum

Call 000 immediately for uncontrollable bleeding, difficulty breathing or swallowing, serious facial injury or other life-threatening symptoms. Do not wait for a dental appointment in these situations. For severe tooth pain or swelling without these emergency signs, contact us promptly. Our team reserves emergency appointments where possible, and you can read about emergency dentistry .

How should you plan care and make an informed decision?

A useful first step is to explain your concern, symptoms, timing and treatment goals when you book. Bring relevant medical information and a current medicines list. Your dentist can then assess your teeth, gums, bite and surrounding tissues, request imaging when clinically appropriate, and explain which options suit you.

Ask what the recommended approach is intended to achieve, whether there are reasonable alternatives, what preparation and aftercare involve, and what risks or limitations apply. Treatment time, fees, recovery and maintenance vary with the diagnosis and the complexity of care. A written treatment plan can help you compare stages, expected appointments and payment arrangements before you proceed.

Sensitivity that matters, and how the published advice describes it

No source we hold describes normal settling after a filling, so we are not going to put a reassuring timeframe on it. What the published advice does describe clearly is the kind of sensitivity that means the pulp may be involved — and that is the more useful thing to recognise.

The Victorian Department of Health's symptom list for a damaged or infected pulp , verbatim:

"unprovoked or spontaneous pain"

"sensitivity to hot and cold drinks and foods"

"pain when biting or chewing"

"loosening of the tooth"

"swelling of the gum near the affected tooth"

"oozing of pus surrounding the affected tooth"

"facial swelling"

Two of those are directly relevant to a recently filled tooth. Sensitivity to hot and cold, and pain when biting or chewing. Neither tells you on its own that something is wrong — but both are on the Department's list, which is why persistent versions of them are worth reporting rather than waiting out.

"Unprovoked or spontaneous pain" is the one that changes the picture. Sensitivity triggered by something cold is different from pain that arrives on its own. The second is first on the Department's list.

And a filling is itself a listed cause of pulp damage. Among the causes the Department names: "deep-seated and untreated tooth decay"; "decay beneath a deep filling" ; "trauma that damages a tooth"; "habitual tooth grinding (bruxism)"; "long-standing cracks in the teeth"; "advanced gum disease".

Decay beneath a deep filling. So a tooth that has been filled before is not off the list, and a deep filling in particular is named.

Why it is worth acting on rather than monitoring indefinitely. "Once the pulp becomes infected, it loses its ability to fight the spread of the infection." The Department's listed complications include bone loss, where "the infection may spread around the ends of the infected root canal and erode surrounding jawbone", and loss of the tooth — where "tooth replacement options are available but may be limited if the infection has already caused advanced bone loss."

And it can be silent. "Sometimes, tooth pulp may become damaged or diseased without any symptoms. In these cases, the problem is usually diagnosed by special tests or x-rays during a dental check-up or treatment for other dental concerns."

Sources: Better Health Channel (Victorian Department of Health), Root canal treatment, betterhealth.vic.gov.au (reviewed 14 July 2025). Accessed 6 November 2026.

The other explanations, each with its own published signature

Sensitivity after a filling has several possible explanations beyond the pulp, and the published descriptions let you recognise which conversation to have.

Decay elsewhere, including around the new filling. The Department is explicit that a filling does not stop the disease: "Just filling a hole will not stop tooth decay from occurring in other areas of the mouth or around the new filling." And decay itself produces the same symptom: "As decay gets worse, people often experience sensitivity to sweet, cold or hot food and drinks. If you feel this kind of discomfort, speak to your dentist as soon as possible to have the decay treated."

Note the addition of "sweet" there. Sensitivity to sweet things is more characteristic of decay than of temperature alone.

Erosion exposing the layer under the enamel. "When dental erosion is advanced, the enamel may wear away, revealing the underlying surface known as dentine; these areas appear yellow on the tooth surface. These areas and any exposed tooth root surfaces can become sensitive to hot, cold and sweet

foods and drinks due to the acid damage." The Department also notes a visible clue specific to a filled tooth: "Fillings may become more prominent if the surrounding tooth surface is dissolving due to erosion."

So if the filling feels like it is standing proud of the tooth, that is a recognised sign of erosion around it rather than of the filling moving.

Dry mouth, which changes where decay forms. "Because they are lacking the protection of saliva, people with dry mouth are more likely to get tooth decay and are more prone to get decay along the gum line (tooth root surface)." And: "Unlike enamel (the outer tooth layer), dentine (the inner tooth layer) is less resistance to acids and can decay quickly, especially without enough saliva to protect it."

Grinding, which both wears and loads the tooth. Acid "can also soften the tooth surface, making it easier for it to be worn away by abrasion or teeth grinding", and grinding is separately on the Department's list of causes of pulp damage. Its tip for minimising wear is to "wear a custom-made dental splint if you grind your teeth at night".

A crack. "Long-standing cracks in the teeth" is on the same list of causes of pulp damage.

What to do about habits in the meantime, without claiming it is a cure. The Department's acid advice applies to a sensitive tooth whatever the cause: "wait at least 30 minutes after the acid exposure before brushing your teeth"; "use a soft-bristled toothbrush with fluoride toothpaste"; "brush your teeth gently, but thoroughly"; and "reduce how often you eat or drink anything acidic and don't leave it sitting in your mouth for too long".

And the reason to raise it rather than wait. The published check-up logic is that problems found early need less doing to them: "Finding decay in the early stages means less of your tooth needs to be repaired in the process of getting a filling." A sensitive filled tooth is exactly the case where "having no pain does not always mean that your teeth and mouth are healthy" cuts the other way — you do have a symptom, and it is worth having looked at.

Sources: Better Health Channel (Victorian Department of Health), Root canal treatment, betterhealth.vic.gov.au (reviewed 14 July 2025); Tooth decay, betterhealth.vic.gov.au (reviewed 28 June 2025); Dental erosion, betterhealth.vic.gov.au (reviewed 22 October 2025); Dry mouth, betterhealth.vic.gov.au (reviewed 9 September 2025); Dental fillings, betterhealth.vic.gov.au (reviewed 1 August 2025); Teeth and mouth care, betterhealth.vic.gov.au (reviewed 25 July 2025). All accessed 6 November 2026.

Frequently asked questions

Is it normal for a tooth to hurt after a filling?

Mild sensitivity is common after a filling, especially to cold. It usually eases over a couple of weeks. Pain that is severe, getting worse or lasting beyond that time should be checked by your dentist, who can examine the tooth and explain the cause.

Why does my filling feel high when I bite?

When a filling is placed, one area can remain slightly high and press harder against the opposing tooth. This can make the tooth sore when chewing. A dentist can adjust the high spot, which is usually a quick appointment.

Can I use a different toothpaste for sensitivity?

Some people find a toothpaste made for sensitive teeth helpful. Ask your dentist or hygienist whether one suits you, and keep brushing gently with a soft brush so the area stays clean while it settles.

Will I need to return to the dentist?

Not always. If sensitivity is easing, you may simply continue your normal routine and attend your next scheduled check-up. If it is not improving, or you feel a high spot, please book a review so your dentist can look at it.

Does a deeper filling mean more sensitivity?

Often, yes. The deeper the cavity and the more extensive the work, the greater the sensitivity you may expect, and this varies significantly between people. Your dentist can tell you what to expect for your tooth.

Is some sensitivity after a filling normal?

No source we hold describes a normal settling period, so we are not going to put a timeframe on it. What the published advice does give is the kind of sensitivity that suggests the pulp is involved, which is the more useful thing to recognise.

Which symptoms suggest the pulp is affected?

The Victorian Department of Health's list: "unprovoked or spontaneous pain"; "sensitivity to hot and cold drinks and foods"; "pain when biting or chewing"; "loosening of the tooth"; "swelling of the gum near the affected tooth"; "oozing of pus surrounding the affected tooth"; "facial swelling".

What is the difference between sensitivity and pulp pain?

The trigger. Pain that arrives on its own — "unprovoked or spontaneous pain" — is first on the Department's list, and is different in kind from discomfort that only follows something cold.

Can a filling itself cause the problem?

A deep one is named as a cause. Among the causes of pulp damage the Department lists "decay beneath a deep filling", alongside deep untreated decay, trauma, "habitual tooth grinding (bruxism)", "long-standing cracks in the teeth" and advanced gum disease.

Could the sensitivity be new decay rather than the filling?

It could. "Just filling a hole will not stop tooth decay from occurring in other areas of the mouth or around the new filling", and decay causes the same symptom: "As decay gets worse, people often experience sensitivity to sweet, cold or hot food and drinks."

Does sensitivity to sweet things mean anything different?

It points more towards decay. The Department includes "sweet" in the decay symptom list — "sweet, cold or hot food and drinks" — while its pulp list names hot and cold.

My filling feels like it is standing proud of the tooth. Is that erosion?

It is a recognised sign of it. "Fillings may become more prominent if the surrounding tooth surface is dissolving due to erosion." Advanced erosion also exposes dentine, and those areas "can become sensitive to hot, cold and sweet foods and drinks due to the acid damage".

Could a dry mouth be involved?

It changes where decay forms. "People with dry mouth are more likely to get tooth decay and are more prone to get decay along the gum line (tooth root surface)", and dentine "is less resistance to acids and can decay quickly, especially without enough saliva to protect it".

Could grinding be the cause?

It is on the pulp-damage list as "habitual tooth grinding (bruxism)", and acid "can also soften the tooth surface, making it easier for it to be worn away by abrasion or teeth grinding". The Department's tip is to "wear a custom-made dental splint if you grind your teeth at night".

What can I do while I wait for an appointment?

The Department's general acid advice applies whatever the cause: "wait at least 30 minutes after the acid exposure before brushing your teeth"; "use a soft-bristled toothbrush with fluoride toothpaste"; "brush your teeth gently, but thoroughly"; and "reduce how often you eat or drink anything acidic and don't leave it sitting in your mouth for too long".

Why not just wait and see?

Because the options narrow. "Once the pulp becomes infected, it loses its ability to fight the spread of the infection", and the Department warns that where infection has caused advanced bone loss, "tooth replacement options are available but may be limited". It also notes that pulp damage can be silent: "the problem is usually diagnosed by special tests or x-rays during a dental check-up".

Related services and further reading

Fillings and restorations

Root canal therapy

General dentistry

Emergency dentistry

How do I know if I need a filling?

I have a cracked tooth. What is that and how is it treated?

Difference between a crown and a porcelain filling?

4 things to avoid if you have sensitive teeth

How can we help?

If you have had a filling and the tooth is not settling, our team can review it at any of our nine Core Dental clinics. Call 13 13 16 or book online through coredental.com.au. See fillings and restorations for more about what we offer.

Core Dental at a glance

Nine Core Dental clinics across Melbourne: Southbank, South Melbourne, Caroline Springs, Carrum Downs, Epping, Wyndham, Berwick, Bayside and Glenferrie.

Open six days a week: Monday to Friday 8.00am to 6.00pm and Saturday mornings.

We quote before treatment starts and offer interest-free payment plans.

Contact Core Dental

Phone	13 13 16
Booking	Online via coredental.com.au
Hours	Monday to Friday 8.00am to 6.00pm, Saturday 8.00am to 1.30pm, Sunday closed

Results, recovery times and potential risks vary for each individual. This information is general in nature and is intended for people over 18. Seek advice from a qualified, AHPRA-registered practitioner before proceeding.

Why can a tooth feel sensitive after a filling at Core Dental?

Any time a tooth is drilled there is potential for sensitivity afterwards. At Core Dental our dentists explain that larger or deeper fillings are more likely to leave a tooth tender, and the amount varies a great deal from patient to patient.

What type of sensitivity is most common after a filling?

Sensitivity to cold temperatures is the most common type after a filling. Core Dental dentists tell patients that a brief twinge with cold drinks or cool air is often part of the normal settling period.

How many weeks can sensitivity last after a small filling?

With a small to moderate filling, temperature sensitivity usually settles within a couple of weeks. Core Dental recommends a review if it lasts longer, or if it is getting stronger instead of slowly improving.

What does a high filling feel like?

A high filling can make the tooth sore when you bite or chew, usually a few days after treatment. Core Dental dentists can check the bite and adjust the high spot, which is generally a quick appointment.

Who can adjust a filling that feels high?

A dentist adjusts a filling that sits high by checking how your teeth meet and reshaping the filling. Our Core Dental dentists do this at our clinics, and you can ask for a review if biting feels uncomfortable.

When should I ring Core Dental about pain after a filling?

Contact Core Dental promptly if pain is severe, keeps you awake, hurts when you bite, lasts beyond a couple of weeks, or comes with swelling. For life-threatening symptoms such as breathing or

swallowing difficulty, call 000.

How do I book a review of a filling at Core Dental?

Call Core Dental on 13 13 16 or book online through coredental.com.au. We are open Monday to Friday 8.00am to 6.00pm and Saturday mornings, and we reserve emergency appointments where possible.

Where can I have a filling reviewed at Core Dental?

You can have a filling reviewed at any of our nine Core Dental clinics: Southbank, South Melbourne, Caroline Springs, Carrum Downs, Epping, Wyndham, Berwick, Bayside and Glenferrie.