

Cracked Tooth Syndrome

You may have a commonly occurring problem in one of your teeth.

Teeth may crack when subjected to the stress of chewing hard foods or foreign objects. They may also crack from the stresses of “bruxism”, which is a common clenching or grinding activity that typically occurs when the patient is sleeping. Teeth with or without restorations may exhibit this problem, but, posterior teeth restored with silver amalgam restorations are the most susceptible.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

1. Often a history of sudden onset of the pain when eating.
2. A sharp pain when eating certain foods.
3. Sensitivity to cold air, cold foods, and beverages.
4. No evidence of the problem on an x-ray.
5. Usually no dental decay is present.
6. The crack may be visualized by the dentist with a bright light or after the filling in the tooth has been removed.

TREATMENT OF CRACKED TEETH

1. **Simple Crack:** The majority of cracked teeth can be treated by placement of a simple crown (cap) on the tooth. When the tooth is prepared for the crown, and a temporary cap is placed, the pain usually subsides within a week of two. The final crown would be permanently cemented once all sensitivity and discomfort has subsided.
2. **Complex Crack:** Occasionally, (about 1 in 10) the tooth cracks into the pulp (nerve) of the tooth. If pain persists after placement of the temporary crown, you may have a crack into the pulp of the affected tooth. Please call us. This tooth may require root canal treatment by an Endodontist before the crown can be placed. A post and foundation may also be necessary prior to the crown.
3. **Root Fracture:** If the root is fractured, then unfortunately, the only treatment is extraction.