

Ameloblastoma is a rare disorder of the jaw involving abnormal tissue growth. The resulting tumors or cysts are usually not malignant (benign) but the tissue growth may be aggressive in the involved area. On occasion, tissue near the jaws, such as around the sinuses and eye sockets, may become involved as well. The tissues involved are most often those that give rise to the teeth so that ameloblastoma may cause facial distortion. Malignancy is uncommon as are metastases, but they do occur. The cause of ameloblastoma is not understood. Causes may include injury to the mouth or jaw, infections of the teeth or gums, or inflammation of these same areas. Infections by viruses or lack of protein or minerals in the persons diet are also suspected of causing the growth or development of these tumors. In general, however, scientists do not understand the cause of cysts and tumors, nor the reasons why they can become malignant. Ameloblastoma is a rare disorder that affects males and females in equal numbers. It affects persons of all ethnic backgrounds and of all age groups. Ameloblastoma can show up either in a regular x-ray or in an MRI imaging study.