

15 Tooth Problems

1- Toothache

You've made a dentist appointment, and it can't come soon enough. Meanwhile, it can help to rinse your mouth with warm water, floss to remove food caught between teeth, and take an over-the-counter pain reliever. If you notice swelling or pus around the tooth, or if you have a fever, that could be a sign that you have an abscess, a more serious problem. See your dentist as soon as possible. You may need [antibiotics](#) as well as other treatments.

2- Stained Teeth

Your teeth are like your laundry: The right approach will remove many stains. Foods, medications, tobacco, and trauma are some of the things that can discolor your teeth. You have three options for whitening them. Your dentist can use a whitening agent and a special light. Or you can bleach them at home with a plastic tray and gel from your dentist or a store. The simplest choice, whitening toothpaste and whitening rinses, only remove surface stains.

3- Cavities

These little holes in your teeth are bad news. You get them when a sticky bacteria, called plaque, builds up on your teeth, slowly destroying the hard outer shell, called [enamel](#). Adults can also have problems with tooth decay at the gum line and around the edges of earlier fillings. To prevent it, brush your teeth at least twice a day with a fluoride toothpaste, limit snacks, floss daily, rinse with a fluoride mouthwash, and keep up with your dental appointments. Ask your dentist if you could benefit from a sealant.

4- Chipped Tooth

It's the No. 1 type of dental injury. An accident can cause a chip. So can something much less dramatic, like chomping popcorn. Your dentist may recommend a crown if the chip is large or bonding with a strong resin material to replace the area that chipped. If the pulp is at risk, you may need a root canal followed by a veneer or crown.

5- Impacted Teeth

An adult tooth that doesn't come in properly is "impacted." It usually happens when a tooth is stuck against another tooth, bone, or soft tissue. If it isn't bothering you, a dentist may recommend leaving it alone. But if it hurts or may cause problems later on, an oral surgeon can remove it.

6- Cracked Tooth

You were playing football without a mouth guard, or chewing, or maybe you don't know how it happened, but now you've got a cracked molar. Can your dentist save the tooth? It depends. Most dentists recommend crowns for cracked teeth to prevent the crack from worsening. If the tooth is sensitive to hot and cold, the problem is more complex. Try to chew on the other side until you see your dentist. If the crack is above the gum line, you may need a root canal and a crown. A deeper crack means the tooth must be pulled, though. Fillings can increase the chance of a crack.

7- Sensitive to Cold

Ice cream should taste good, not make you wince when the cold hits your teeth. The first step is to find the cause. It could be cavities, worn tooth enamel or fillings, gum disease, fractured teeth, or exposed roots. Once your dentist figures out the problem, you might need a filling, a root canal, or treatment of your gums to replace tissue lost at the root. Or you might just need a desensitizing toothpaste or strip, or a fluoride gel.

8- Too Many Teeth: Hyperdontia

How many teeth are in your mouth? If you're like most people, you had 20 primary, or "baby," teeth, and you now have 32 adult teeth. It's rare, but some people have extra teeth, which is called hyperdontia. People who have it may also have another condition, such as a [cleft palate](#) or Gardner's Syndrome (which forms tumors that aren't cancer). The treatment is to get the extra teeth removed and use orthodontics to correct the bite.

9- Crooked Teeth

The fix -- orthodontia -- isn't just for kids. And straightening crooked teeth and aligning your bite doesn't just make for a prettier smile. It can be an key part of improving overall dental health, relieving symptoms like jaw pain. Orthodontists may use braces (metal or trays), aligners, and retainers.

10- Gap Between Teeth

You may not consider a gap between the front teeth a problem at all. Famous people who sport the look include singer Madonna, actress Anna Paquin, model Lauren Hutton, and football player turned TV co-host Michael Strahan. If you want to correct it, though, your options include orthodontics to move teeth closer together and cosmetic solutions like veneers or bonding.

11- Gum Problems

Do your gums bleed easily? Are they tender? Do you notice them pulling away from your teeth? You might have gum disease ([gingivitis](#)). A buildup of plaque, a sticky bacteria, below the gum line causes it. Left untreated, it can at some point cause bone loss, and your teeth might shift or become loose. That can make it harder to chew and even speak. To avoid gum disease, brush, floss, and rinse with an antiseptic mouthwash daily, and see your dentist for regular cleanings.

12- Clenching or Grinding Your Teeth

Grinding your teeth is called [bruxism](#). Stress is one of the causes. Misaligned teeth or sleep issues can also be culprits among adults. (Among kids, causes can include allergies.) Bruxism can give you headaches, a sore jaw, and cracked or loose teeth. If you grind your teeth at night, ask your dentist to fit you with a mouth guard. If it's a daytime problem, try meditation, exercise, or other ways to curb stress.

13- Wisdom Teeth Problems

If your dentist says your wisdom teeth, or third molars, came in problem-free, count yourself lucky. Most people -- 90% -- have at least one wisdom tooth that's impacted, or not able to fully grow in. Problems with your wisdom teeth can cause cavities, damage to neighboring teeth, and gum disease. Wisdom teeth generally come in between the ages of 17 and 25. Your dentist should track their progress. If they become a problem, you may need to get them removed.

14- No Room to Floss

No matter how tight the fit, there should always be room for floss between your teeth. If not, you may need to switch to a thinner floss or a waxed one. You can also try a different kind of tool, such as a looped flosser or a dental pick. Experiment until you find a product that works for you, and then use it every day. Flossing is a must for good dental health.

15- Do Grills Cause Problems?

Bonding a decorative metal cover to the teeth with glue not meant for use in your mouth can do damage. And a grill made from less expensive metal than gold or silver could irritate your mouth. Always remove a grill before you eat, and make sure you keep it, and your teeth, clean.

Top 10 Common Dental Problems and Treatment

1. Tooth Decay

Tooth decay is also known as dental caries or dental cavities. It is the most common dental problem that dentists see in patients. Practically everyone, at some point in their life, has experienced tooth decay.

Tooth decay occurs when bacteria form a film, called plaque, on the surface of teeth. The bacteria produce acids from the sugars in food. The acids eat away at and permanently damage the enamel, or outer layer, of the tooth. The acids then start working on the softer dentin layer beneath the enamel.

This breakdown of the tooth can lead to cavities or holes in your teeth. It can also cause toothaches, including pain when you eat and drink hot, cold, or sweet things.

Other symptoms of tooth decay may include:

- Bad breath
- Black or brown spots on your teeth
- An unpleasant taste in your mouth

Dental care begins with assessing the extent of your tooth decay and recommending a course of action. This may include [fillings, crowns, or a root canal](#). The option chosen may be extraction followed by dental implants or dentures.

You can help to prevent tooth decay with regular (twice daily) brushing and flossing. Also, get regular checkups from your dentist to have the plaque scraped from your teeth.

2. Gum Disease

Gingivitis is the early stage and mild form of gum or periodontal disease. It is a bacterial infection that is caused by the buildup of plaque. Common symptoms are gums that are red, swollen, and bleed easily. You may also experience bad breath and sensitive teeth that hurt when you chew.

Skip brushing and poor brushing techniques can contribute to gum disease. So, too, can crooked teeth that are hard to brush properly. Other risk factors include tobacco use, pregnancy, and diabetes.

It is important to note that gingivitis can be painless and as such, you may not notice it. This makes regular dental checkups a good idea.

Gingivitis can be treated by a thorough cleaning from your dental health professional. To prevent it from coming back, you will have to practice twice-daily brushing and flossing.

Periodontitis

Left untreated, gingivitis can become a more severe form of gum disease called periodontitis. This is when pockets in the gum become infected. This can lead to damage of the bone and tissue that hold the teeth, as these, too, become infected.

It can also lead to

- Shrinking and receding gums
- Loose permanent teeth
- A change in bite
- An unpleasant taste in your mouth
- Persistent bad breath

What's more, periodontitis can trigger an inflammatory response throughout your body.

Dental care for periodontitis includes topical antibiotics to treat the infection or a referral to a periodontist – a gum disease specialist.

3. Bad Breath

Bad breath or halitosis is one of the most common dental problems. It is also among the most distressing. Bad breath can be caused by several different factors, including:

- Poor oral hygiene
- Dry mouth
- Medication
- Infection
- Acid reflux
- Cancer

One or more of the foods you eat could also be the cause of your halitosis. Spices such as garlic and onion are common culprits.

Because the causes of bad breath are so varied, your dentist will do a complete assessment and prescribe a course of action that best suits your case.

4. Sensitive Teeth

Your teeth become sensitive to hot and cold foods and drinks when the enamel is worn away and the dentin is exposed.

The dentin has tubes that lead to the nerve deeper inside the tooth. Hot or cold substances can travel along the tubes to the nerve and cause intense pain.

Tooth sensitivity, also known as dentin hypersensitivity, can be caused by tooth decay. Other possible causes include:

- Gum disease
- Root infection
- A cracked or broken tooth
- Worn-down crown or fillings
- Enamel erosion
- Receding gums

You could also have sensitive teeth because the enamel layer of your teeth is naturally thin.

There are kinds of toothpaste and mouthwashes meant specifically for use with sensitive teeth. Your dentist might also recommend a fluoride treatment, crown, gum graft, or a root canal. The chosen treatment depends on the severity of your case.

5. Cracked or Broken Teeth

Cracked or broken teeth are most often caused by:

- Injury
- Chewing hard foods
- Mouth piercings
- Grinding of teeth while you sleep

A cracked or broken tooth can cause you a lot of pain, depending on the extent of the damage. Regardless of how bad you think the crack or chip is, you should have it examined and treated by a dentist as soon as possible. Options for fixing this dental problem include a veneer, crown, or the use of tooth-colored filling.

6. Receding Gums

Receding gums can be caused by and can lead to other common dental problems. The condition can also lead to more serious issues, such as losing a tooth. This is because the condition exposes the delicate root of the tooth, making it susceptible to damage. Receding gums can be caused by a range of factors, including:

- Poor oral hygiene
- Brushing your teeth too hard

- High blood pressure
- Hormonal fluctuations in women
- Smoking

Your receding gums might also be genetic, that is, the condition runs in your family. Dental care for receding gums includes a thorough cleaning of your teeth by a dental professional. You may also be shown proper brushing techniques. Severe cases may need to be treated with a gum graft or other form of surgery.

7. Root Infection

The base or root of your tooth can become infected and swollen with bacteria. This most often happens because of cavities, cracks, or fractures in the tooth. Root infection can lead to damaged tissues and nerves of the tooth, and eventually to the development of abscesses.

A chronic (long-lasting and persistent) throbbing toothache is one sure sign of root infection. Both chewing and biting will be painful and the part of your mouth where the infection is will be very sensitive to hot and cold food and drinks. In some cases, the area of the face around the infection also becomes swollen.

A root infection is treated by a root canal. And, although many of us cringe in fear at the thought of [having a root canal performed](#), the procedure is actually very safe with minimal pain since dentists use anesthetic while performing root canals.

8. Enamel Erosion

Enamel erosion is a condition that develops very slowly and leaves teeth both discolored and rounded-looking. Its primary cause is consuming plenty of sugary and acidic foods such as soda and sweets over a long period of time. A rare cause is brushing your teeth too often, too hard, and too long.

Enamel erosion leads to teeth that are very sensitive, weaker, and more susceptible to cracks, chips, and cupping. The lost enamel cannot be restored on teeth that have suffered enamel erosion. However, you can greatly reduce any further enamel erosion by cutting back on sugary and acidic foods. Using toothbrushes with softer bristles helps, too. You can also greatly improve the appearance of your teeth with [dental veneers](#).

9. Dry Mouth

Anyone can be affected by dry mouth. It is not a natural part of aging but it is more common among the elderly. Causes of dry mouth include cancer treatments, salivary gland disease, nerve damage, and diabetes. HIV/AIDs and certain medications can also bring on dry mouth and dry throat.

You can relieve dry mouth and dry throat by taking sips of water throughout the day. You should also avoid substances that are known to be drying. These include alcohol, tobacco, caffeine, and sweets.

10. Teeth Grinding

Bruxism is the dental term for when you grind your teeth. Grinding most often occurs while you sleep but can also happen while you are awake. It can damage your teeth, cause you to develop jaw pain, and might even lead to headaches and earaches.

Some dental conditions can lead to grinding. These include:

- A new filling or crown that is higher than your other teeth
- [An abnormal bite](#)

Some persons suffer from bruxism when they have a sleep disorder, are stressed, or are dealing with anxiety. Treating these underlying issues could help to ease or stop your grinding.

Symptom 1	Symptom 2	Symptom 3	Disease	Treatment
gum disease	a cracked tooth	worn-down fillings or crowns	dentin hypersensitivity	mouthwash
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Black, white, or brown tooth stains	Holes or pits in your teeth	Pain when you bite down	cavity	Brush your teeth with warm water
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Yellowish discoloration	Cracked or chipped teeth	Grooves on your teeth's surface	Tooth Erosion	Chew sugar-free gum
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Cracked or chipped teeth	Yellowish discoloration	Grooves on your teeth's surface	Tooth Erosion	Chew sugar-free gum
bleeding	pain	sore throat	Mouth Sores	Cryotherapy
bleeding	sore throat	pain	Mouth Sores	Cryotherapy
pain	bleeding	sore throat	Mouth Sores	Cryotherapy
Ear Pain	Dramatic weight loss	Difficulty chewing or swallowing	Oral Cancer	Eat a well balanced diet
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