

EAST AYRSHIRE

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Gum disease, erosion and sensitivity

Information for you



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Steps for good oral health:

- Keep sugary snacks and drinks to mealtimes
- Brush teeth twice a day using 1450ppm fluoride toothpaste
- Visit the dentist regularly

Gum disease

Gum disease is the swelling, soreness or infection of the gum tissue. Gum disease can affect anyone of any age though some groups are more at risk, such as pregnant women, due to hormonal changes. (See leaflet, Dental care: During pregnancy and into motherhood).

Cause

Gum disease is caused by plaque and poor oral hygiene. Plaque is a type of bacteria which forms in your mouth. If it is not removed it can cause problems with your teeth and gums. Plaque is a sticky substance which can only be removed by effective toothbrushing and cleaning between the teeth.

When plaque is not removed it attacks the gums and makes them red and puffy (gingivitis). As this progresses, the supporting structures break down (periodontitis) and can eventually result in tooth loss.

Gingivitis is the first stage of gum disease. Signs and symptoms may include:

- **Red puffy gums**
- **Swelling**
- **Gums bleed easily when brushed**
- **Halitosis (bad breath)**

You can treat gingivitis by following an effective oral hygiene routine.

Periodontitis can occur when gingivitis is left untreated. Signs and symptoms may include:

- **Loose teeth**
- **Pain and discomfort**
- **Increased sensitivity of teeth**
- **Halitosis**

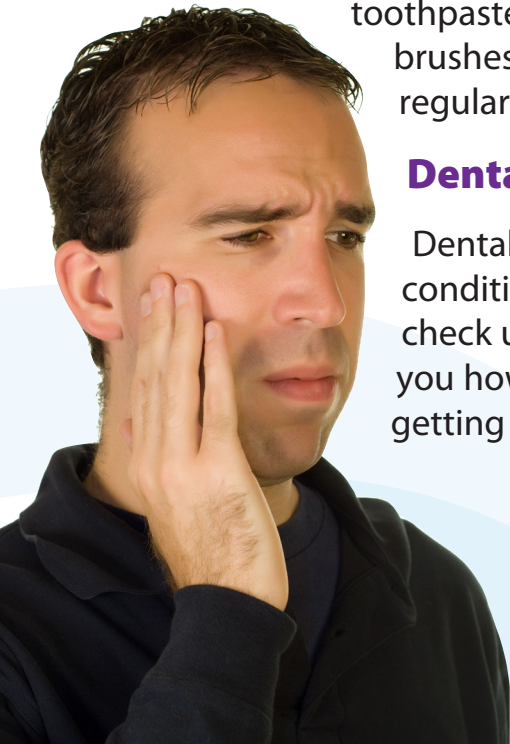
If symptoms continue contact your dentist or hygienist for advice.

Prevention

To help prevent gum disease brush teeth and gums for two minutes twice a day with 1450ppm fluoride toothpaste (you will find this printed on the toothpaste tube). Use floss or interdental brushes every day and visit the dentist regularly.

Dental erosion

Dental erosion is an irreversible condition, but with regular dental check ups your dentist can advise you how to stop the condition from getting worse.



Signs and symptoms may include:

- **Loss of tooth enamel (outside surface of tooth)**
- **Enamel is worn away and sensitive dentine underneath is exposed**
- **Pain and sensitivity**

Enamel on teeth becomes softer for a short time every time you eat or drink something acidic. This includes regular and diet fizzy drinks, fizzy and flavoured water and fresh fruit juice.

Your saliva slowly neutralises the acidity in your mouth and restores it to its natural balance. If these acid attacks happen too often your mouth does not have the chance to repair itself and over time the surface of your teeth may start to wear away.

Other causes of dental erosion may include morning sickness, bulimia and acid reflux.

Prevention

Keep acidic food and drinks to mealtimes and use a drinking straw to reduce contact with teeth.

Chew sugar-free gum for around 20 minutes after meals – this stimulates saliva flow which naturally cleanses the mouth and reduces the level of acidity.

Where possible avoid brushing immediately after eating or drinking something acidic.

Your dentist may recommend using an alcohol free fluoride mouthwash at a different time from toothbrushing.

Sensitivity

Having sensitive teeth is something which can affect people of all age groups and can occur at any time. If the dentine is exposed the tooth will become sensitive. It often occurs where the tooth and gum meet.

Causes

- **Toothbrush abrasion**
- **Dental erosion**
- **Receding gums**
- **Gum disease**
- **Tooth grinding**

You may experience sensitivity when you breathe in cold air or when you eat or drink something hot, cold, sweet or acidic.

Treatment

You can use toothpaste for sensitive teeth (1450ppm fluoride) to brush your teeth twice a day or to rub in to sensitive areas between your teeth and gums.

If symptoms continue and you need further information speak to your dentist.

If you have any concerns please contact your own dentist first

or

the **Dental Advice Line** for urgent care or advice on weekdays, 8.30am to 6pm 01292 616990

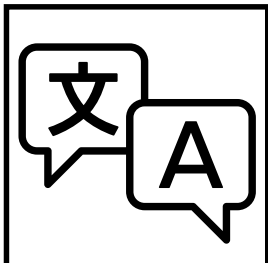
or

NHS 24 for dental emergencies out-of-hours 111

A list of dentists who are available for patients to access can be found on our NHS Public Website or Dental App – see front of page of this leaflet for details

For other oral health leaflets visit our website:
www.nhsaaa.net/better-health/topics/oral-health

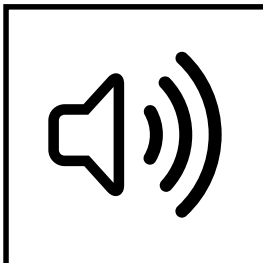
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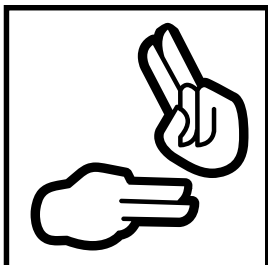
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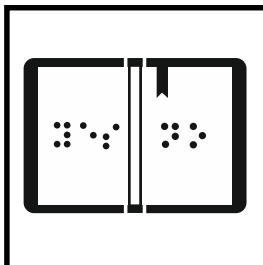
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