

Top 5 Oral Health Concerns

Dental Health Article



Oral health issues can be inconvenient, painful & even embarrassing. The good news? The majority of oral health problems can easily be prevented by practicing good daily oral hygiene (flossing & brushing) & visiting your dentist regularly. Here are 5 of the most common oral health concerns, along with how they are typically treated.

1 Bad breath (halitosis) is an unpleasant smell or odour on your breath that can be easily detected by others. **It is estimated that up to 50% of the population suffers from temporary bouts of bad breath!** In most cases, it is caused by excessive odour-causing bacteria in the mouth as a result of poor oral hygiene practices. However, chronic bad breath may be an indication of poor oral health or other serious diseases (e.g. diabetes) & should be further investigated by a physician.

Treatment: In most cases, bad breath can be easily prevented by practicing daily preventative care (brushing, flossing & using mouthwash) & attending regular preventative care dental appointments.

2 Canker sores (aphthous ulcers) are small, open sores characterized by a greyish centre with a red, swollen base that can appear anywhere inside your mouth. Canker sores are often very painful, irritating & unsightly but are **not** contagious. The exact cause of canker sores is unknown but evidence has found that fatigue, stress, bacteria/viruses, the immune system, genetics, systemic disease & other factors may play a role in triggering the onset & frequency of canker sores.

Treatment: For canker sores, treatment is not generally necessary, as they heal by themselves over a week or two. However, applying an over-the-counter topical anaesthetic or rinsing with a mild saltwater solution may temporarily alleviate symptoms of a canker sore.

3 Discoloured teeth (staining) may not be considered a direct threat to oral health, but it can affect your social life, professional image & your self esteem. Although most people's teeth tend to darken naturally over time, poor oral hygiene, tobacco, certain medications, genetics & certain teeth-staining foods (e.g. red wine, coffee, tea) can accelerate natural teeth staining.

Treatment: Most discoloured teeth can be successfully whitened with professional whitening at your dental centre. Always make sure that a teeth whitening treatment is right for you first, based upon the advice of a dental professional.



4 Tooth sensitivity is a common problem & can make enjoying some of your favourite foods very difficult & painful. If you suffer from sensitive teeth, you likely experience sharp, painful sensations or discomfort in response to different temperatures & pressures (e.g. consuming hot, cold, sweet or acidic foods or biting down on hard foods). Tooth sensitivity results when tooth enamel is damaged, exposing the nerves in the dentin below. Although sometimes painful, sensitivity (due to dentin exposure) does not generally cause any permanent damage to the teeth.

Treatment: Treatment for sensitive teeth (that do not have any underlying dental issues) is simple. Brush regularly with desensitizing toothpastes.

5 Periodontal disease (gum disease) is a harmful bacterial infection of the gums & jaw bone that exists in two stages: gingivitis and periodontitis. **Gingivitis** occurs in the early stages of periodontal disease & is a mild inflammation of the gums caused by excessive plaque build-up on teeth over time. If left untreated, gingivitis can advance to the more serious stage of periodontal disease called periodontitis. **Periodontitis** is an inflammation of the tooth structure where severe infection, pain, jaw bone degradation & tooth loss may occur if left untreated.

Treatment: Customized, treatment plans are developed by your dentist or periodontist, and involve ongoing scaling and root planing appointments. The treatment timeline can vary, depending on the disease type & severity.

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