



Toothaches

SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

- Pain in or around a tooth that throbs or occurs with a fever and/or general ill feeling. Tooth pain occurs after you eat or drink or have something hot, cold, or sweet.
- Gums are red, swollen, and/or bleed.
- Earache and/or swollen glands on one side of the face or neck.



CAUSES

- A food particle, such as a popcorn hull, gets stuck between the gum and a tooth.
- Tooth grinding (bruxism). This can wear down teeth and cause cracks in them.
- A cavity or infection is beneath or around the gum of a tooth.
- Tooth abscess. This is swelling and/or infection in the bone and/or the tooth's canals.
- Gum (periodontal) disease
- Impacted teeth. Teeth may not fully erupt or can grow at odd angles.
- Temporary pain from recent dental work
- Temporomandibular Disorders (TMD)
- Tooth injury
- Symptom of a sinus infection
- Symptom of angina or heart attack

TREATMENT

Emergency care is needed for a heart attack. A dentist or doctor can diagnose and prescribe proper treatment for other dental problems.

TRIAGE QUESTIONS

With tooth pain, do you have any of these problems?

- Gnawing pain in the lower teeth or neck.
- Chest discomfort beneath the breast bone
- Pain that travels to or is felt in the arm or neck

NO

YES

GET MEDICAL CARE FAST



Do you have any signs or symptoms of toothaches listed on this page?

NO

YES

SEE DOCTOR/DENTIST

USE SELF-CARE



SELF-CARE / PREVENTION

Treat Tooth Pain Until You See the Dentist

- Gargle with warm salt water every hour. Hold an ice pack on the jaw. Don't drink hot or cold liquids. Avoid sweets, soft drinks, and hot or spicy foods. It may be best not to eat at all until you see your dentist.
- Gently floss around the tooth to remove food particles that could be between the teeth.
- Take an over-the-counter pain reliever. Don't place a crushed aspirin on the tooth, though. Aspirin burns the gums and destroys tooth enamel.
- For a cavity, pack it with a piece of sterile cotton soaked in oil of cloves. You can get this at a drug store.