

# Oral Health Screening

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**Prepared by:  
Calgary Zone Community Oral Health Team  
& the AHS Provincial Oral Health Office**

# Healthy Mouth / Healthy Body

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Ideal to include oral health exam in physical exam

*“The health of your mouth provides a window into the health of your body. You are not healthy if your mouth is not healthy.”*

Dr. Peter Cooney, Chief Dental Officer of Canada

# Dental Coverage for Refugees

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For those covered by the Interim Federal Health Program (IFHP), initial services are limited to **emergency** relief of **pain** and/or **infection** only

Pain and infection may be present simultaneously, or separately

# Oral Health Screening

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Three criteria to help define a dental “**emergency**”:

- 1) **Pain**
- 2) **Infection/Swelling**
- 3) **Broken teeth**

# Oral Health Screening

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## 1) Pain

May not be visibly obvious

Common questions to inquire about dental pain:

- *Do you have any pain in your mouth at this time?*
- *Do you have any pain in your mouth that wakes you up at night?*
- *Do you have any pain in your mouth that prevents you from eating or makes eating difficult?*

# Oral Health Screening

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## 1) Pain

Additional questions:

- *If you have tooth pain to temperature changes, are your teeth sensitive to **hot** or cold?*
- *When you have tooth pain to temperature changes, does the pain stop as soon as the stimulus is removed, or does it linger (i.e. trigger a toothache)?*
- *If you currently do not have mouth or tooth pain, have you had any mouth or tooth pain at any time over the last year?*

# Oral Health Screening

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## 2) Infection/Swelling

Examine both outside and inside the mouth

- External - swelling is primarily seen in the cheek areas, but could also be located around the eyes, under the chin
- Internal - swelling is usually seen on the gums on the outer, or cheek side; or in the vestibule
  - may also be found on the inside of the gums, on the tongue side; floor of the mouth, under the tongue
- There may, or may not, be pain associated with the swelling

# Oral Health Screening

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## 3) Broken Teeth

If a patient has badly broken down teeth:

- these teeth are likely to be causing pain, but not always. The patient may report that the teeth were painful in the past, but no longer.
- you may, nor may not, see signs of swelling in the area

Even if there are no signs of pain and/or swelling, broken teeth can be classified as an “emergency”.



# Oral Health Screening

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Tips for conducting an oral health screening:

Areas to check:

- Extraoral
- Intraoral

Positioning of the client:

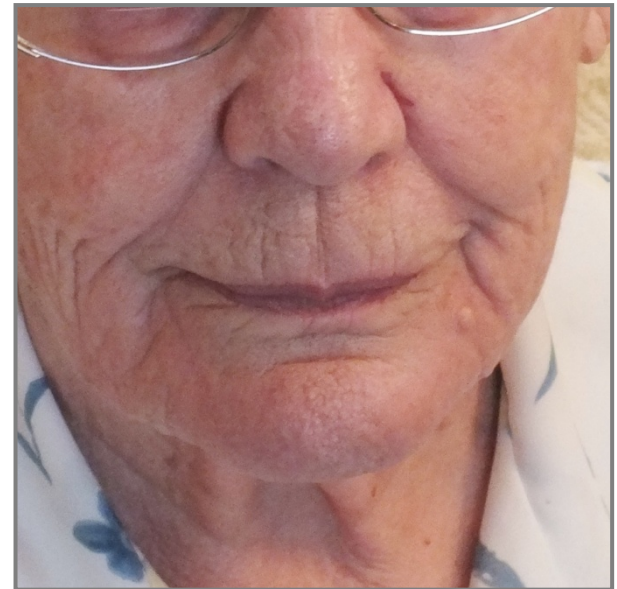
- Knee to knee – for preschoolers
- Facing the client – for children and adults

# Oral Health Screening - Areas to Check

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## Extraoral

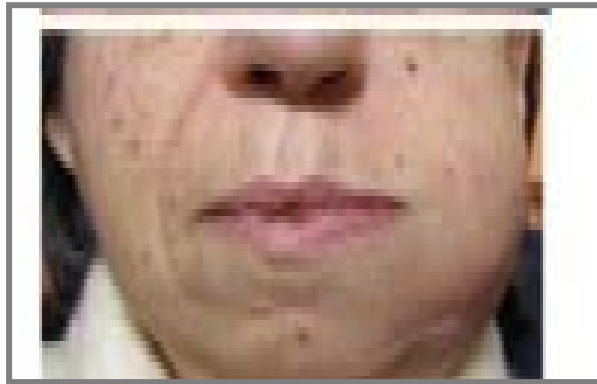
- Start with looking at the patient's profile and face
- Look for symmetry of their cheeks, jaw, and eyes – looking for any signs of swelling
- Look for changes in the color of skin around mouth
- Signs of infection might be: facial swelling, swollen lymph nodes, redness



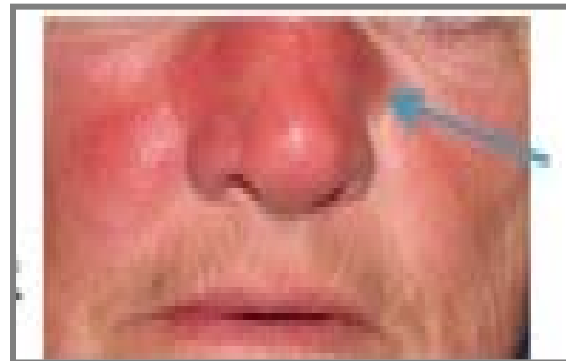
# Oral Health Screening

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## Extraoral - Infection/Swelling & Color Changes



Facial swelling that  
may be dentally  
related



Enlarged lymph node

# Oral Health Assessments

## Intraoral - Lift the lip

- Retract the cheeks and lips to allow for view of areas not readily visible
- Examine all tissues including teeth, gums, tongue, cheeks, and the roof and floor of mouth
- For client of any age
- Disposable dental mirror can be used but is not necessary
- A flashlight is often helpful



# Oral Health Screening

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## Intraoral - Infection/Swelling & Broken teeth

Signs of infection might include a swelling on the gums, obvious signs of drainage



Abscess with Extensive  
Decay/Broken teeth

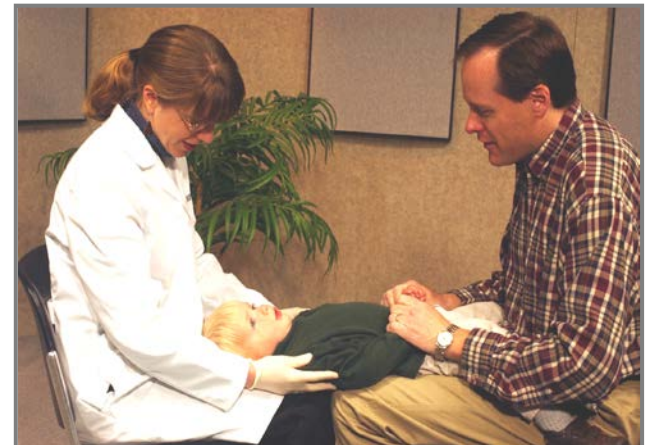


Draining Abscess

# Oral Health Assessments - Positioning

## Knee to Knee

- Effective with young children
- Provides comfort and support to child
- Involves the parent
- Allows clinician good access to lift the lip and view inside the mouth
- Disposable dental mirror can be used but is not necessary
- A flashlight may be helpful, but is not necessary



# Oral Health Assessments - Positioning

## Facing the Client

- For older children and adults
- Client can be standing or sitting
- Allows clinician good access to lift the lip and view inside the mouth
- A light makes it possible to view hard to see areas – a flashlight can be used



# Decay – root tips remain

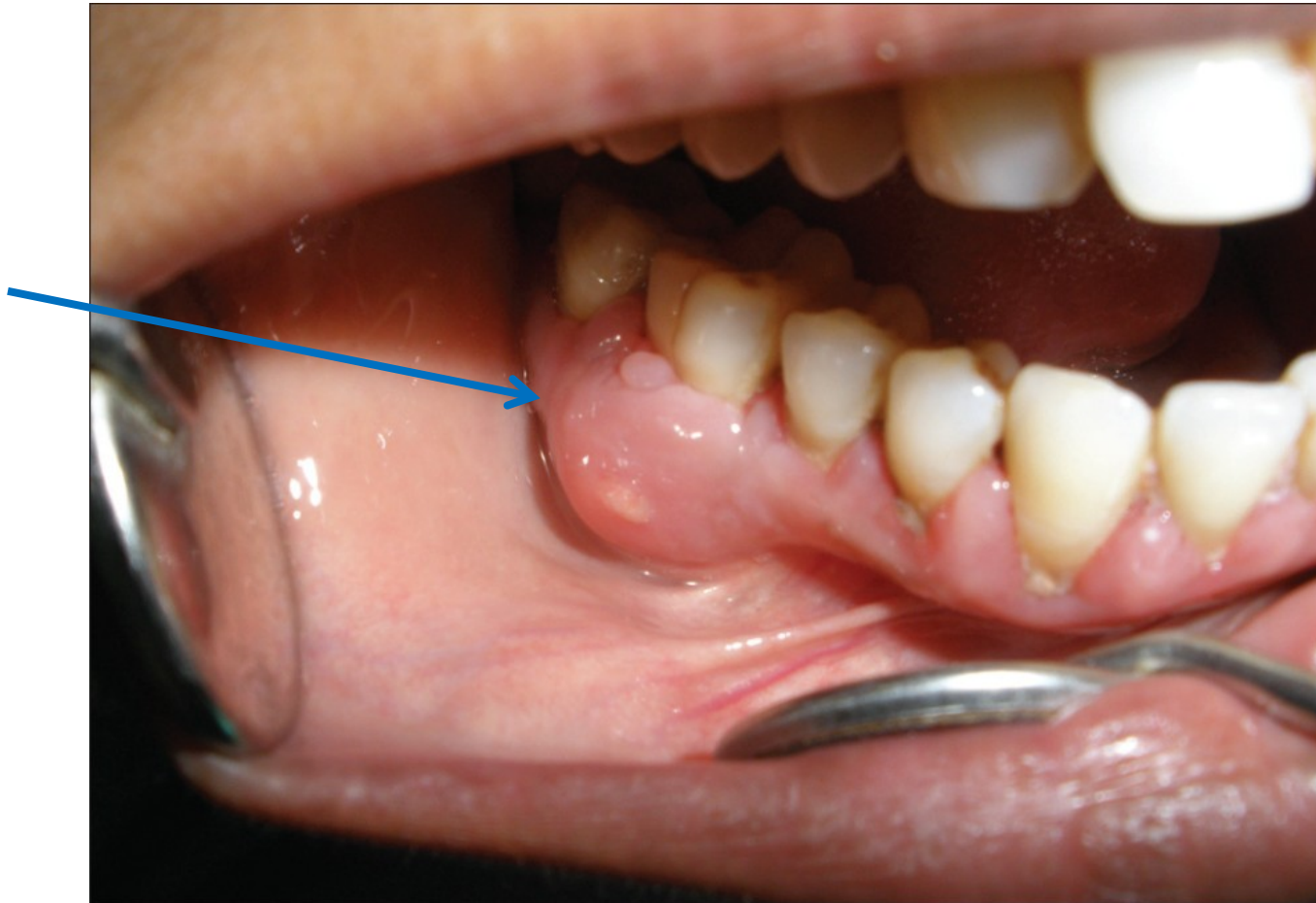
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# Dental abscess – gum swelling

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# Decay – broken teeth

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# Decay – broken teeth

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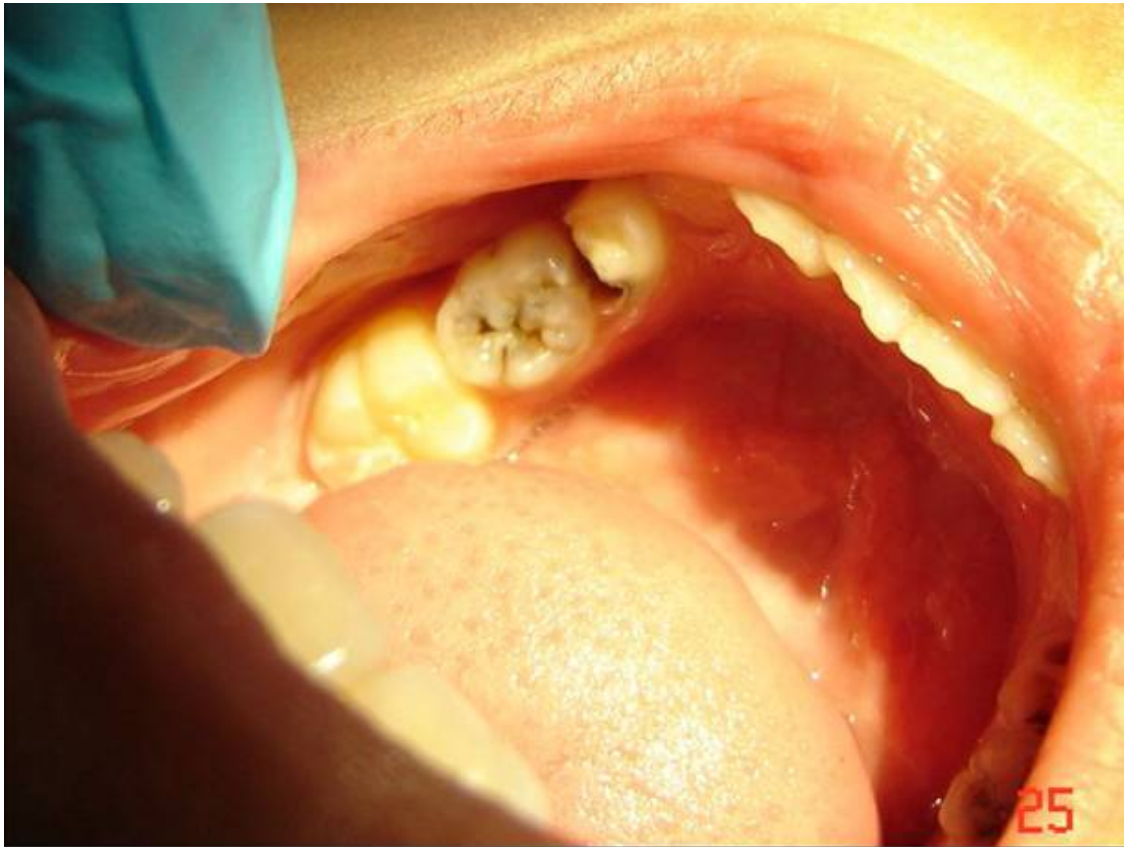
## Decay – New tooth erupting underneath

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# Decay – broken teeth

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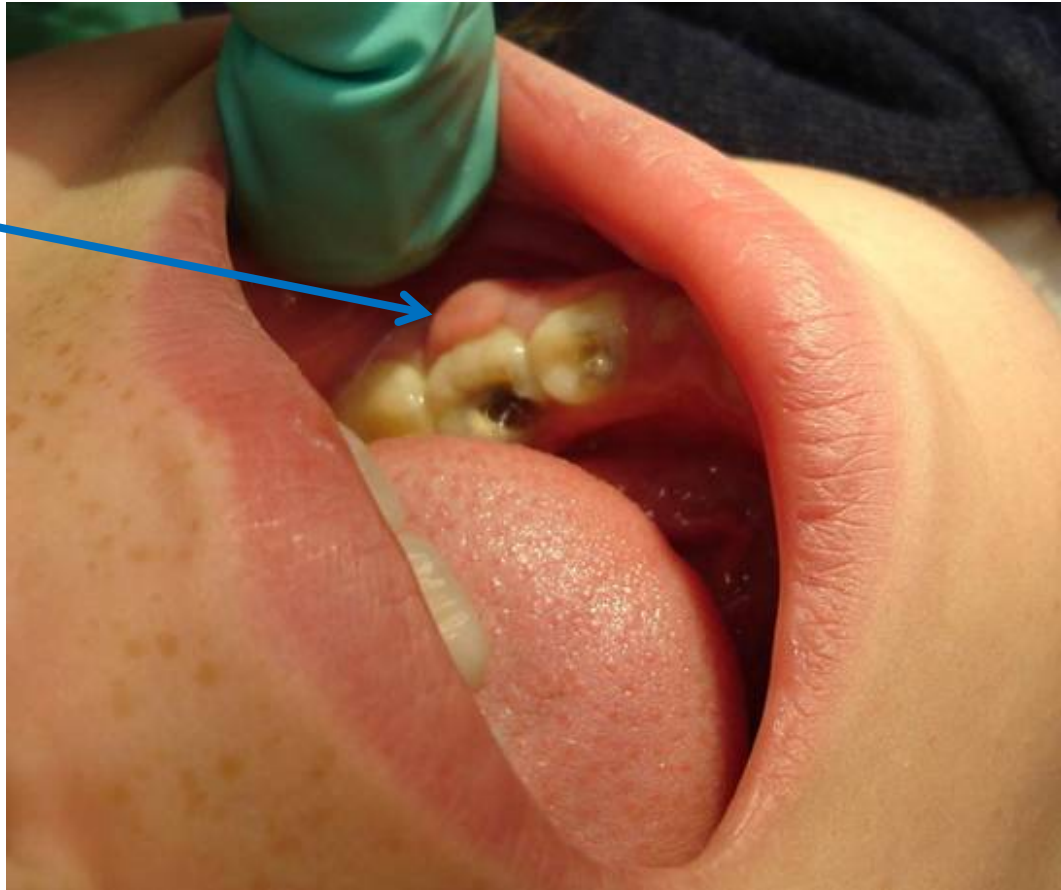
# Decay – broken teeth

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# Decay and abscess

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# Dental abscess – gum swelling

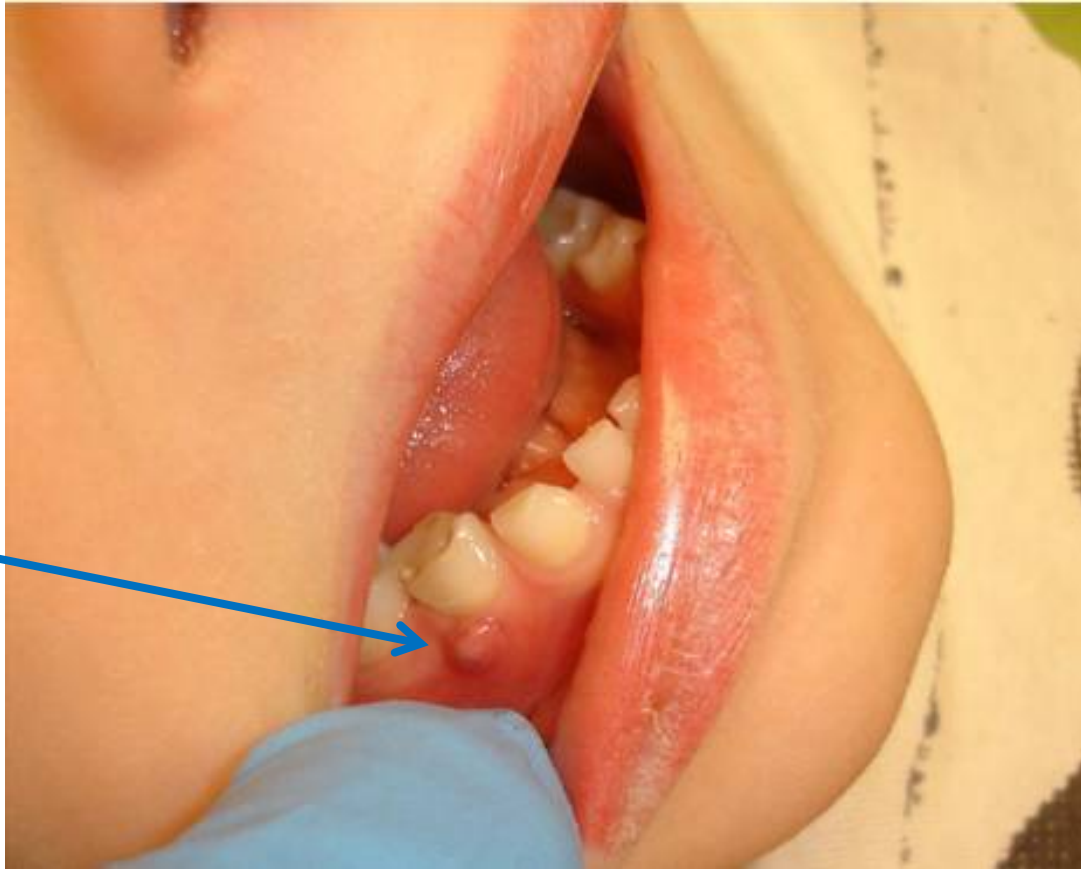
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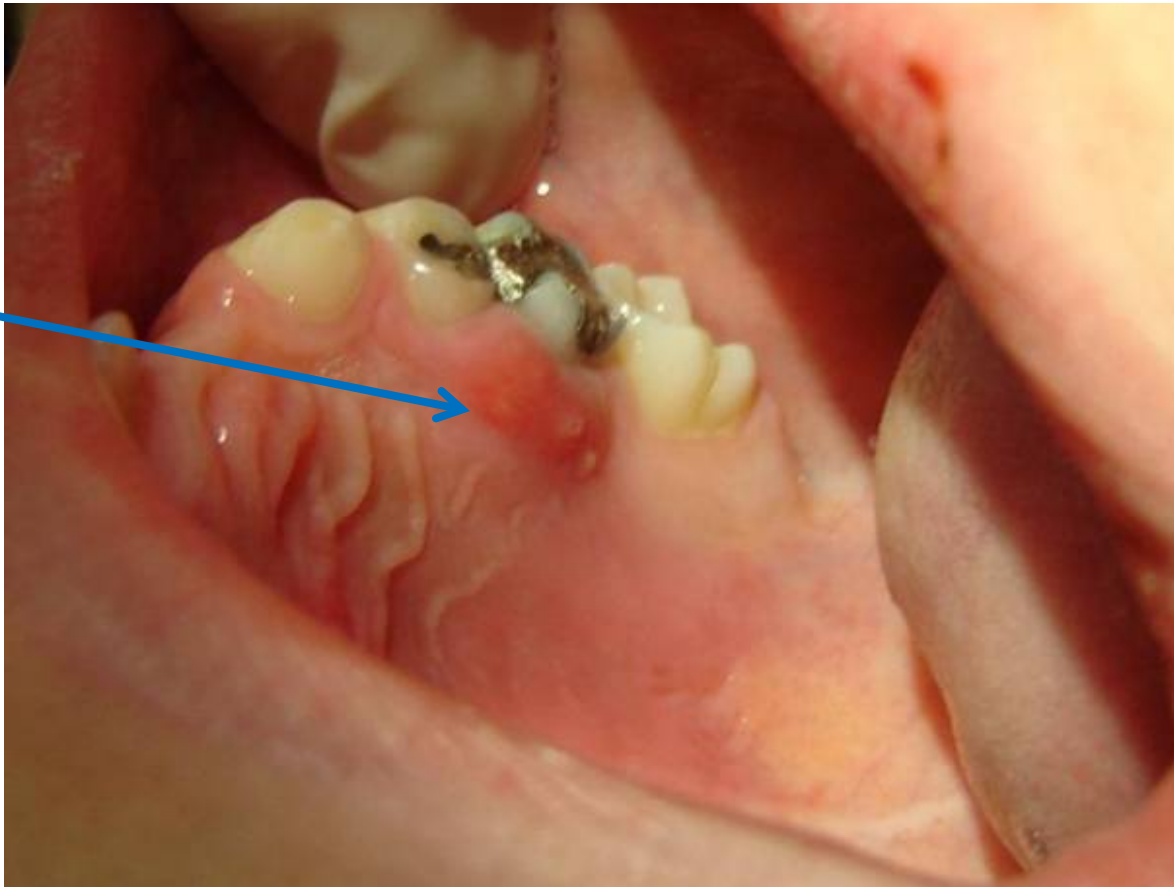
# Dental abscess – gum drainage

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# Dental abscess – gum drainage

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# Decay – broken teeth

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# Decay – possible pain

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# Decay – possible pain

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# Decay – possible pain

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# Referrals for Care

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- IFHP coverage - limited to **emergency** relief of **pain** or **infection** only
- Offices accepting patients with IFHP coverage can be found at:

[https://www.medavie.bluecross.ca/cs/ContentServer?c=ContentPage\\_P&pagename=IFHP\\_CIC\\_Public%2FContentPage\\_P%2FIFHP\\_CICOneColumnFull&cid=1181930640841](https://www.medavie.bluecross.ca/cs/ContentServer?c=ContentPage_P&pagename=IFHP_CIC_Public%2FContentPage_P%2FIFHP_CICOneColumnFull&cid=1181930640841)

Patients/Sponsors can access information on health benefits for refugees at:

<http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/outside/arriving-healthcare.asp>

## For Further Information

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For questions regarding the oral health screening, contact:

Dr. Heidi Rabie (Calgary Zone) at

[Heidi.Rabie@albertahealthservice.ca](mailto:Heidi.Rabie@albertahealthservice.ca)

Dr. Marianne Howell (Edmonton Zone) at:

[Marianne.Howell@albertahealthservices.ca](mailto:Marianne.Howell@albertahealthservices.ca)

Note: the photographs used here are examples only; the same condition can present itself differently in individual clients