

Dental Care



The Truth about Sugar

According to the Addiction Center, nearly 75% of Americans overeat sugar and can be classified as having an addiction.

Too much of the sweet stuff has been linked to obesity, diabetes and heart disease. Sugar can also dramatically impact your oral health through a compound of actions.

When you consume sugary drinks or foods, plaque bacteria use the sweetener to produce acid that attacks the enamel, according to the American Dental Association (ADA). Once this protective tooth covering is compromised or cracked, a trip to the dentist is the most efficient solution. If you must drink soft drinks throughout the day, the ADA recommends drinking a cup of water along with it.

Take control of your oral health by adding tooth-friendly options into your diet and ditching the sugary contents.

DRINK, DON'T SIP

You may think that sipping a drink helps your teeth by adjusting for the incoming sugar. However, slowly consuming a beverage will allow the bacteria to eat the sweetener, promoting erosion and creating cavities. Do your best to finish the drinks in one sitting rather than sipping on it over time.

EATING TIPS

If you enjoy a healthy relationship with the occasional soft drink, learn how to consume it while preventing its destructive tendencies. When you do ingest sugary beverages or foods, make sure to do so with a balanced meal.

As you eat, the mouth pro-

duces saliva, which reduces the effects of acid production. Saliva is also excellent for dislodging food particles that may otherwise remain stuck in your mouth.

Limiting snacks between meals is another good habit to begin. When deciding what to eat, consider something

nutritious and chew sugarless gum afterward to promote saliva buildup.

FOODS AND BEVERAGES TO INCLUDE

When you're adjusting your diet to achieve a cleaner mouth, make sure to add plenty of healthy fruits and

vegetables.

You can also add quality sources of protein like lean beef, fish or poultry. Vegetarians can get nutrients from foods like dry beans, peas and legumes. Filling up with healthy foods can help you feel fuller longer and avoid snacking.



Oral Effects of Cannabis Use

As of early 2020, 33 states plus the District of Columbia had legalized medical marijuana.

Recreational use laws have been lifted in 11 states, with more on the ballots for 2020. If you're unfamiliar with cannabis use, it's essential to become accustomed to physical and mental effects before consuming. You may be surprised about how much of an impact it has on oral health.

According to the American Dental Association, regular cannabis users are often linked to poor dental care. Some of the contributing factors are thought to include:

- Using it regularly with tobacco and alcohol.
- THC in cannabis acts as an appetite stimulant, which may lead to poor diet choices.
- Orally inhaled smoke may lead to leukoedema.

If you choose to use the substance in a state where it is legally available, consider these factors regarding how it may degrade your oral health and how you can prevent complications.

GOOD HYGIENE HABITS

Oral health is vital to every American, regardless of what they choose to do recreationally. However, introducing cannabis into your life requires more maintenance and committing to healthy habits. Your first line of

defense is by attending annual visits to your dentist. Depending on the integrity of your current oral health, they may recommend more frequent appointments or cleanings.

When speaking to your trusted professional, it's imperative to be honest about

your lifestyle. They can build a customized treatment or maintenance plan without judgment. In addition to regular visits, marijuana users should ensure they brush their teeth at least twice a day and floss to reinforce their gum tissue.

Another benefit is rinsing

out the mouth with water and baking soda to eliminate the sticky film left by smoke.

PROBLEMS TIED TO MARIJUANA USE

Since marijuana causes dry mouth in many of its users, staying hydrated is critical for your oral and overall health.

Keep in mind that your salivary glands will typically underperform, allowing harmful acids, plaque and remnants of food to remain on the teeth.

You should also be conscious of the types of food you ingest. Keep healthy snacks nearby to avoid sticky candies or junk food.



The Importance of Mouth Guards

For adults and children who participate in physical sports, a mouth guard is a crucial tool required to protect your smile.

When partaking in activities like football, basketball or mixed martial arts, this protective barrier cushions blows to the face.

They are efficient in minimizing situations like a broken jaw, chipped teeth or lip injuries. Foregoing the protection equipment during combat sports can lead to expensive oral surgeries or permanent damage.

Some think that mouth guards are dangerous to the integrity of our teeth and gums. However, when used correctly and properly cared for, they can be injury-saving resources. Suppose you or someone you know needs this type of guard. In that case, it can be beneficial to visit a dentist to be fitted to custom specifications.

CHOOSING A MOUTH GUARD

While there are numerous mouth guards available at sporting goods stores, the most efficient option is custom-made for its user.

Your local dentist can analyze your oral make-up and design the perfect fit that offers pinnacle protection. If this one-of-a-kind option isn't in your

budget, there are other styles to consider. Here is more about different choices from the American Dental Association.

- **Boil and bite.** The partially custom mouth guard begins as a solid mold until they are boiled and softened. Once inserted in the mouth, they quickly adapt to the shape of the user. It's crucial for the best

results to choose an option that has earned the ADA Seal of Acceptance.

- **Stock.** These are designed with a one-size-fits-all approach. They are pre-formed and ready for use but have disadvantages, making it challenging to breathe or talk.

If you can't afford a custom mouth guard, it's a good idea to

discuss better options with your dentist to avoid injuries or an ineffective model.

CARE AND REPLACEMENT

Your mouth guard is ready for a replacement at the first sign of wear or damage. Analyze it before every use to ensure the mold is intact and comfortable. As they age, it's

common for a protector to become ill-fitting.

To prolong the use you get from a mouth guard, proper care is crucial. Make sure to clean it with soap and water after use and keep it in a dry area during storage. Your container should be vented to allow airflow and avoid bacteria growth.



Sleep Disorders and Oral Health

Have you noticed yourself clenching or grinding your teeth during tense or stressful situations? While this action is sometimes involuntary, the effects on your teeth or jaws can be severe.

By recognizing this habit while you're awake, you can consciously avoid the movement. However, if you're unaware that it continues at night, you may need treatment to repair the significant damage.

When the condition occurs during slumber, it is known as sleep bruxism. The dangerous condition is more prevalent in children and adolescents when compared to middle-aged or older adults. According to the Sleep Foundation, up to 50% of kids experience nighttime teeth grinding.

HOW TO SPOT SYMPTOMS

Unless clenching wakes you up at night, it can be challenging to realize it's happening. Here are some symptoms to watch for to find out if it's affecting your mouth.

- Jaw and neck pain upon waking up.
- Morning headaches caused by tension.
- Unexplained tooth damage.

If you feel like you are exper-



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riencing these signatures of teeth grinding, make an appointment with a specialist to find a solution.

CONSEQUENCES

Avoiding treatment for sleep bruxism can cause severe damage to your teeth. Consequences like toothaches and erosion are typical for once-healthy pearly whites.

Grinding in your sleep can even harm restorations like dental crowns, fillings and implants.

Some severe cases can lead to damage to the temporomandibular joint, which is the part connecting the lower jaw to your skull. Once compromised, people have difficulty chewing, chronic pain, lockjaw or hear popping and clicking

noises. The range of problems that occur from bruxism depends on the alignment of a person's teeth, diet and current integrity of one's overall health.

TYPICAL CAUSES

The Sleep Foundation suggests that one of the most significant factors determining if someone grinds their teeth is stress levels. Researchers have

proven that another contributing element is a genetic component passed down from family members.

A more disturbing cause of the disorder can be associated with its link to obstructive sleep apnea. Those with this syndrome face interrupted sleep due to upper airways that collapse during slumber, blocking airflow.

Smart Electric Toothbrushes

The American Dental Association recommends that people brush their teeth twice a day for two minutes using fluoride toothpaste.

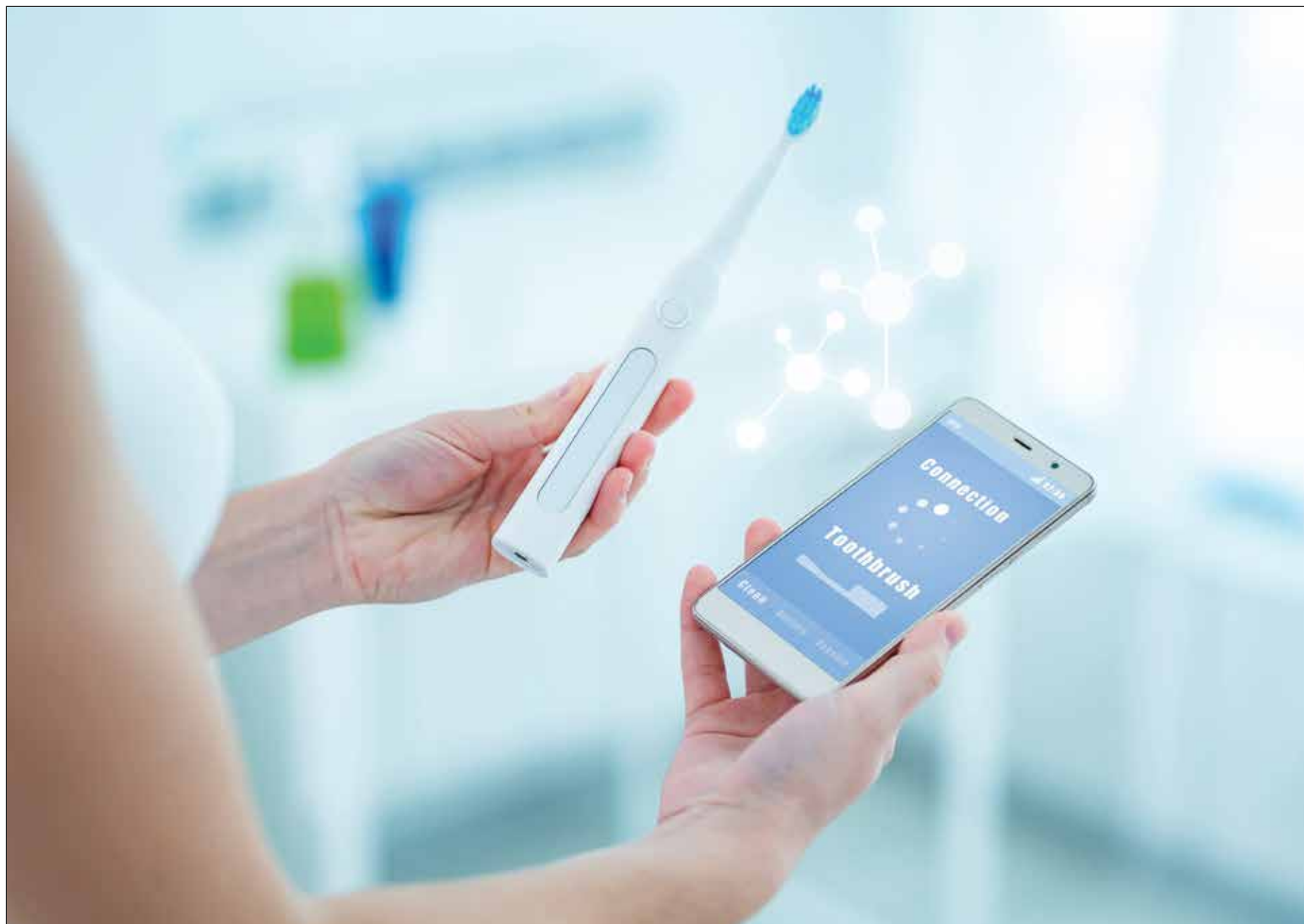
Ensuring your removing prevalent plaque is significant to prevent decay and re-mineralize enamel. When choosing a brush, they suggest using soft bristles and replacing them every three to four months.

If you're bored with a traditional toothbrush, rest assured that smart technology can save the day. Today's models come with innovative features that will benefit your oral health. Check out these updated options that were showcased at the 2020 Consumer Electronics Show.

iO

Equipped with a dentist-inspired round brush design, the iO is designed to provide near professional care with each use. It features a Smart Pressure Sensor that guides the user to avoid brushing too hard, harming teeth and gums.

There are numerous modes to achieve different cleanliness levels, including whitening, daily clean and tongue cleaning. One of its next-level features is the 3D Teeth Tracking and AI Recognition software. It uses an interactive



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display to guide users for the deepest clean in all areas of the mouth.

If you need help staying on top of your oral care, the brush even connects to Bluetooth to keep track of your habits.

PLAQLISS PRO

The winner of the 2020 CES Best of Innovation Award in Health and Beauty coaches its

users in real-time to achieve the most effective cleaning. The Plaqliss Pro is equipped with optic sensor technology to detect biofilm buildup and guides the operator to the compromised area. Once the tooth is determined clean, the brush will alert you and moves on to the next recommended spot. It uses onboard sensors that connect to an app that customizes the

brushing experience with precise techniques. After finishing the job, users receive instant feedback on their habits, personalized data and oral care tips.

Y-BRUSH

The Y-Brush offers a new twist on traditional toothbrushes, claiming to clean one's mouth in just ten seconds. The first difference you

may notice is its design. Rather than a brush with a handle, this model takes more of a mouth guard shape.

A user adds their favorite toothpaste, chews the bristles for five minutes, then flips and repeats. The motorized unit takes care of the brushing by expertly completing the Bass technique of toothbrushing and leaving the mouth fresh and clean.

Children's Dental Awareness

Efficient oral care begins in infancy and carries on into the toddler years to establish good habits.

As a parent, you should remain diligent in promoting proper brushing techniques, correcting missteps and replacing a child's toothbrush as the bristles become damaged. February is National Children's Dental Awareness Month (NCDHM). Take advantage of the movement by committing to practicing better oral management to enhance your children's overall health.

The history of NCDHM dates to 1941, where it began as a one-day event in Cleveland, Ohio. The American Dental Association (ADA) first officially recognized the program in 1949 and ultimately changed it to a week-long celebration in 1955. It was 1981 when the observance shifted into a month-long celebration, as it remains today.

Check your community for participating dentist offices that may offer free screenings, tours and presentations.

Encourage your children to get excited about classroom projects like coloring contests, essay writing and health fairs.

Learn how to get kids on board with better oral health with these tips from the ADA.

MAKE IT FUN

Young children may need encouragement to practice the



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chore of brushing teeth. Incorporate these fun ideas into their routine.

- Allow them to choose their toothbrush and favorite flavor of toothpaste.
- Read books or watch videos on the correct techniques.
- Let them set a two-minute timer to ensure their brushing

is sufficient.

- Reward children for excellent oral care with healthy snacks or small treats such as stickers.

If your child is hesitant or afraid of visiting their dentist, make sure to plan a fun trip after the appointment to make it less intimidating.

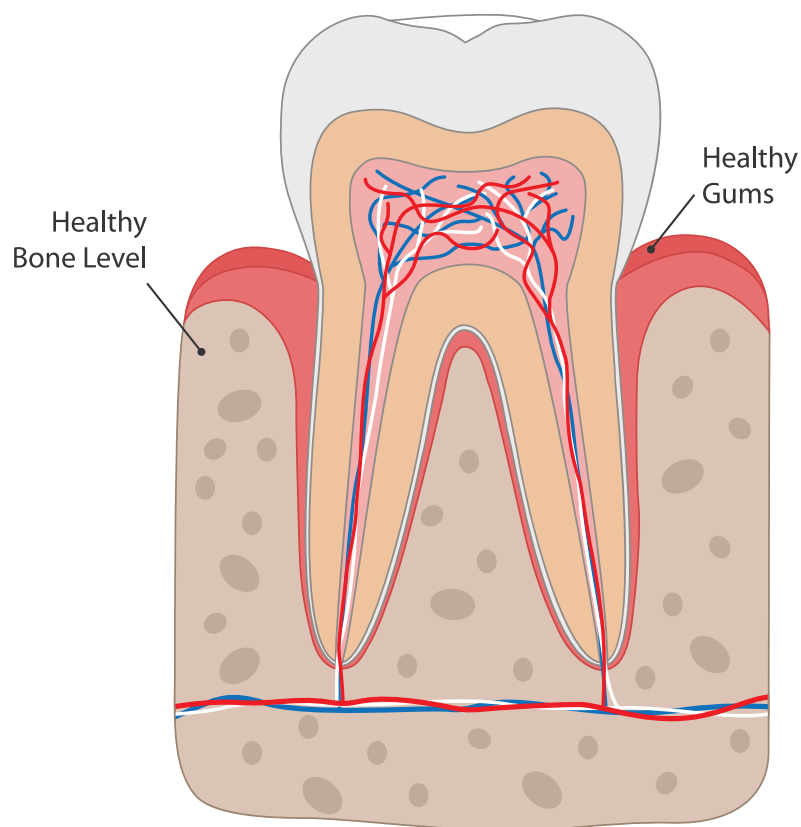
IMPROVE THEIR DIET

If you allowed a child to plan their meals, you would expect plenty of candy, ice cream and juices. As mom and dad, it's your responsibility to ensure they consume balanced meals and save the sweet stuff as good behavior rewards, followed by thorough

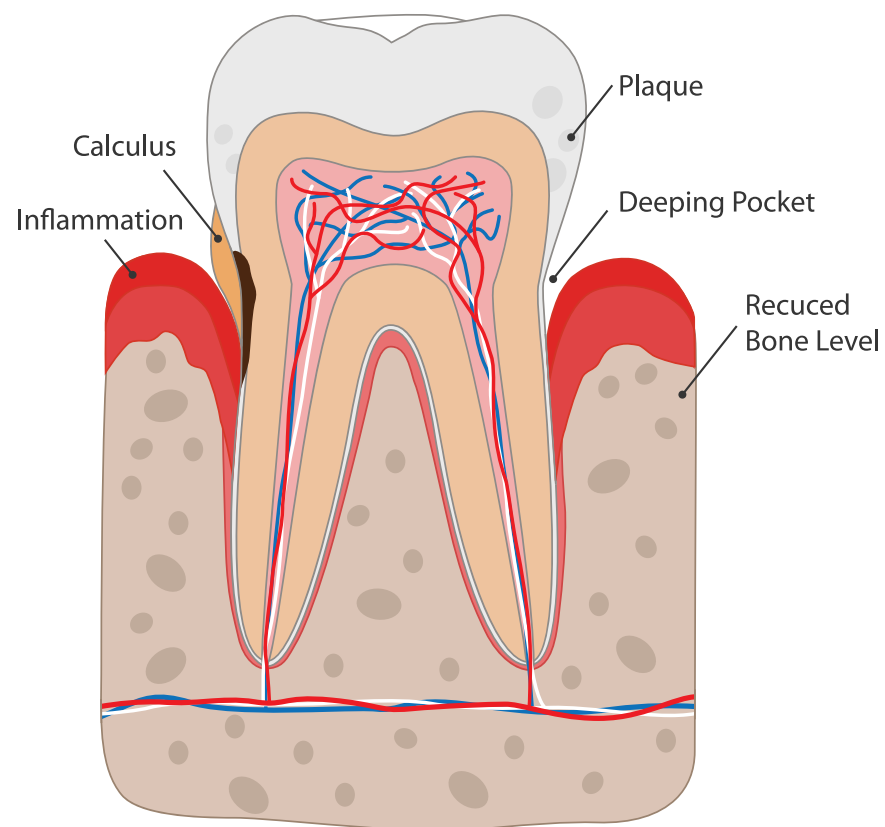
brushing.

Try to avoid allowing them drinks like soda, teas and juices as they are typically loaded with sugar. However, when they inevitably do get their favorite sugary beverage, include a glass of water afterward to help wash it away from their teeth.

Healthy tooth



Periodontitis



Oral Health Diseases

Oral health refers to the condition of teeth, gums and the facial system that helps us smile, speak and chew.

While one concern is an unhealthy smile, illnesses like diabetes and heart disease are often associated with poor dental care. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that over 40% of adults have felt pain in their mouth within the last year and will have had at least one cavity by age 34.

Check out some other statistics from the CDC that showcase how poor hygiene affects both children and adults.

- The nation spends more than \$124 billion on costs related to dental care each year;
 - On average, over 34 million school hours and over \$45 billion in productivity are lost annually due to dental emergencies;
 - Public health strategies include spending to include community water fluoridation and school sealant programs to help enhance oral care.
- Here are some common diseases caused by inadequate oral hygiene, as

reported by the CDC.

CAVITIES

As enamel is compromised by acids and plaques that collect on teeth, it begins breaking down and results in a cavity. Eating and drinking foods high in carbohydrates causes bacteria to promote acid development that tears away the protective layer.

Cavities can be largely preventable if treated in a timely fashion. About one-fourth of young children, half of adolescents and more than 90% of adults experience tooth decay in their lifetime. If left untreated, a cavity can lead to an abscess in the gums, which can

sometimes spread to other parts of the body.

PERIODONTAL DISEASE

This common gum disease is mainly caused by infections and inflammation of the gums and bones that support the teeth. Numerous conditions heighten one's risk for developing the disease, like diabetes, weak immune system and genetics. Once teeth lose their integrity from surrounding bones, they can become loose or require extraction.

The symptoms you can expect from this illness include bad breath, swollen or receding gums or painful chewing.