

# What's Normal? What's Not? When Should I Refer?

## An Oral Health Photo Guide



Photo Credit: *Color Atlas of Oral Diseases, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, 1998*



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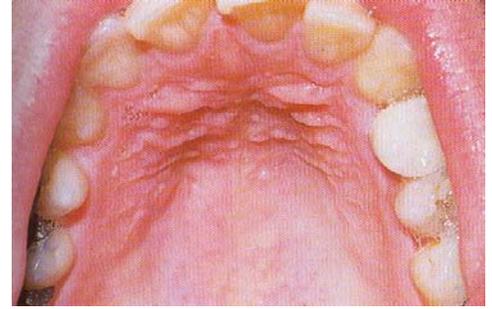


Photo Credit: *Color Atlas of Oral Diseases, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, 1998*

**1. Healthy Mouth.** Teeth should be clean and free of food, plaque, and tartar with no untreated decay. Gums should be pink without swelling, bleeding, or tenderness.

**2. Healthy Tongue.** Tongue should appear moist, slightly rough, and mostly pink with a whitish sheen. There should be no significant lumps, bumps, or sores.

**3. Healthy Palate.** Roof of the mouth may appear somewhat ridged or bony, but should be pink with no significant lumps, bumps, or sores.



Photo Credit: *Yakima Health District*



Photo credit: *Oral Health in the Elderly – A Manual for Home Health Caregivers, University of Iowa*



Photo Credit: *Dr. Martin Spiller*  
<http://www.doctorspiller.com/decay.htm>

**4. Gingivitis.** Gums are red and swollen and may bleed easily. Brushing and flossing can help reverse this condition. Professional care may be needed to return to a healthy condition.

**5. Periodontal Disease.** Gums are receding or moving along the length of the teeth, exposing roots and supporting bone to infection and decay. This may result in tooth loss. Professional care is needed.

**6. Caries.** When a tooth decays, its enamel surface breaks down and allows acids and bacteria to enter its softer interior. A dental restoration (filling or crown) can repair the damage.

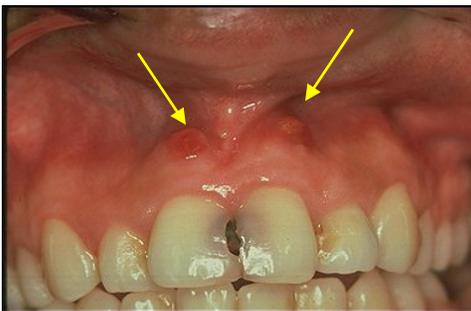


Photo Credit: *Dr. Carl Allen, Ohio State University*



Photo Credit:  
<http://www.scofsg.com/images/Inf6.jpg>



Photo Credit: *Washington Dental Service Foundation*

**7. Abscessed Teeth.** If decay goes untreated, infection may enter the tooth roots. Swelling on the side of the gum often indicates an active infection. Immediate professional care is needed

**8. Facial Swelling from Abscess.** If an abscess goes untreated, the infection may spread beyond the tooth, causing facial swelling and serious complications. Immediate professional care is needed.

**9. Fluoride Varnish.** A medical or dental professional can paint on the teeth to prevent decay. This is especially helpful for adults with dry mouth who may develop new decay on the roots of the teeth.



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**10. Denture Irritation.** Often appears as redness on the palate and gums where the appliance rests, and may cause pain during eating. Note the dental restorations in this photo, including gold crown, fillings, and metal crowns with porcelain veneers.

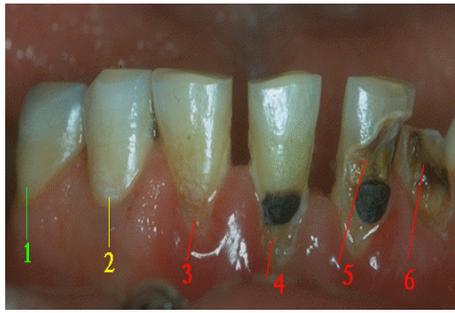


Photo Credit: Prof. D. Bratthall, Sweden  
<http://www.db.od.mah.se/car/data/cariesser.html>

**11. Root Caries.** This person held sugary candy next to his teeth to soothe his dry mouth. The result was root caries—decay on tooth roots—which can quickly destroy teeth. Note the change from a healthy tooth (#1) to severely decayed and broken teeth (#5 & #6) tooth on the right.



Photo Credit: <http://www.library.vcu.edu>

**12. Cracks in Corners of Lips.** Cracks in the corners of the mouth may be caused by fungal infections, irritation, or nutrient deficiencies, but often are related to dry mouth. If cracks do not heal within two weeks, professional care is needed.

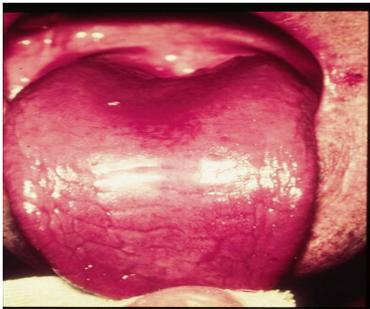


Photo Credit: Yakima Health District

**13. Dry, Painful Tongue.** A dry tongue often appears smooth, red, and slightly swollen. Dry tongue can make speaking, tasting, and swallowing difficult. Notice sore at corner of lips.



Photo Credit: Dr. John Giunta  
[http://www.forsyth.org/oralpathology/case\\_057.htm](http://www.forsyth.org/oralpathology/case_057.htm)

**14. Possible Fungal Infection on Tongue.** Some medical conditions may result in fungal infections in the mouth. If the mouth does not return to normal within two weeks, professional care is needed.



Photo Credit: Dr. John Giunta  
[http://www.forsyth.org/oralpathology/case\\_077.htm](http://www.forsyth.org/oralpathology/case_077.htm)

**15. Sore Tongue.** A smooth, or red, or sore tongue may result from a vitamin or mineral deficiency. Nutrient deficiencies also may cause sores or cracks around the lips. Professional care is needed if these do not go away within two weeks.



Photo Credit: Dr. John Giunta  
[http://www.forsyth.org/oralpathology/case\\_058.htm](http://www.forsyth.org/oralpathology/case_058.htm)

**16. Unidentified Lip Sore.** A sore like this may have many causes. However, if it does not heal within two weeks, professional care is needed. This sore was later found to be cancerous.



Photo Credit: *Color Atlas of Oral Diseases, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, 1998*

**17. Unidentified Oral Lesion.** Normally, a sore or cut in the mouth will heal quickly. This is on a tongue, but similar sores could occur on the cheek, roof of the mouth, under the tongue, under or near a denture. Anything that lasts more than two weeks should be checked.

