

**Nursing Assessment Guidelines**  
**Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections (ODRC)**  
**HEENT Complaints – Dental pain**

**Definition:** a serious, disabling condition of the teeth or surrounding tissues, manifested by severe symptoms and occurring suddenly or unexpectedly.

**Etiology:** dental pain may be caused by severe dental decay or injury to the teeth or jaw.

<p><b>Subjective:</b> Patient History</p> <p><u>Pt complaint:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● “I’ve got a bad toothache”; “My jaw hurts real bad”</li> <li>● C/O severe pain in teeth or jaw</li> <li>● May c/o swelling in face, gums or throat</li> <li>● May have visible facial swelling</li> <li>● May c/o pain while drinking hot or cold liquids or eating hot or cold foods.</li> </ul>	<p><u>Onset:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Usually sudden onset</li> <li>● May be recurrent</li> </ul> <p><u>Past Medical History</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Tooth decay</li> <li>● Recent dental extraction</li> <li>● Recent injury to face/jaw</li> </ul>
<p><b>Objective:</b> Physical Assessment</p> <p><u>Vital Signs:</u></p> <p>T: afebrile or low grade fever  Pulse/Respiration: within normal limits  BP: within normal limits  Pain scale: 1-10</p> <p><u>General Appearance:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Generally within normal limits</li> <li>● May have facial swelling</li> <li>● Evidence of injury to face or jaw</li> </ul>	<p><u>Mouth</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Visual evidence of tooth decay</li> <li>● Redness of gums surrounding affected tooth</li> <li>● Swelling of gums surrounding affected tooth</li> <li>● Evidence of pus/purulent drainage</li> <li>● Evidence of bleeding of gums or oral tissue</li> <li>● c/o pain during percussion (gentle tapping) of affected tooth</li> </ul>
<p><b>Nursing Assessment:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Acute Pain R/T tooth pain</li> </ul> <p><b>Differential Diagnosis: (see appropriate nursing guidelines)</b></p>	<p><b>Differential Diagnoses: (refer to advanced provider):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Facial/jaw injury</li> <li>● Dental decay</li> <li>● Fractured tooth</li> <li>● Dental infection</li> </ul>
<p><b>Nursing Care Plan:</b></p> <p>Refer to advanced provider <b>immediately</b> if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Temperature 101<sup>0</sup></li> <li>✓ Recent injury with severe pain and/or fractured teeth</li> <li>✓ Severe dental pain with or without signs of infection or injury</li> <li>✓ Patient cannot close mouth</li> <li>✓ Evidence of profuse bleeding following a dental extraction</li> <li>✓ Visible facial or intraoral swelling</li> <li>✓ Avulsed tooth</li> </ul> <p><u>Routine referral to advanced provider if:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Dental pain not relieved by acetaminophen, aspirin or ibuprofen.</li> </ul> <p>If referral to an advanced provider is not indicated, the nurse should consider the following interventions, as indicated by the patient's presenting symptoms and the physical assessment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Acetaminophen 500 mg by mouth 2-3 times per day as needed for dental pain, OR</li> <li>● Aspirin 325 mg, 1-2 tablets 2-3 times per day as needed for dental pain, OR</li> <li>● Ibuprofen 200mg, 1-2 tablets by mouth 2-3 times per day as needed for dental pain, AND</li> <li>● Routine referral to dentist</li> </ul> <p><u>Patient Education</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Instruct pt in good oral hygiene</li> <li>● Medication side effects</li> <li>● Pt. to return to sick call if symptoms do not improve in 24 hours</li> </ul>	