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.

### Subjective: Patient History

- **Pt complaint:**
  - “I’ve got a bad toothache”; “My jaw hurts real bad”
  - C/O severe pain in teeth or jaw
  - May c/o swelling in face, gums or throat
  - May have visible facial swelling
  - May c/o pain while drinking hot or cold liquids or eating hot or cold foods.

### Onset:
- Usually sudden onset
- May be recurrent

### Past Medical History

- Tooth decay
- Recent dental extraction
- Recent injury to face/jaw

### Objective: Physical Assessment

#### Vital Signs:
- T: afebrile or low grade fever
- Pulse/Respiration: within normal limits
- BP: within normal limits
- Pain scale: 1-10

#### General Appearance:
- Generally within normal limits
- May have facial swelling
- Evidence of injury to face or jaw

#### Mouth
- Visual evidence of tooth decay
- Redness of gums surrounding affected tooth
- Swelling of gums surrounding affected tooth
- Evidence of pus/purulent drainage
- Evidence of bleeding of gums or oral tissue
- c/o pain during percussion (gentle tapping) of affected tooth

### Nursing Assessment:
- Acute Pain R/T tooth pain

### Differential Diagnosis: (see appropriate nursing guidelines)

### Nursing Care Plan:

**Refer to advanced provider immediately if:**
- Temperature 101°F
- Recent injury with severe pain and/or fractured teeth
- Severe dental pain with or without signs of infection or injury
- Patient cannot close mouth
- Evidence of profuse bleeding following a dental extraction
- Visible facial or intraoral swelling
- Avulsed tooth

**Routine referral to advanced provider if:**
- Dental pain not relieved by acetaminophen, aspirin or ibuprofen.

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:
- Acetaminophen 500 mg by mouth 2-3 times per day as needed for dental pain, OR
- Aspirin 325 mg, 1-2 tablets 2-3 times per day as needed for dental pain, OR
- Ibuprofen 200mg, 1-2 tablets by mouth 2-3 times per day as needed for dental pain, AND
- Routine referral to dentist

### Patient Education
- Instruct pt in good oral hygiene
- Medication side effects
- Pt. to return to sick call if symptoms do not improve in 24 hours