

IMAGES IN CLINICAL MEDICINE

Tongue Mucocele



AN 8-YEAR-OLD BOY WAS REFERRED FOR EVALUATION OF A MASS IN THE midline of the ventral surface of the anterior tongue. The lesion had fluctuated in size since it was first noted 4 months earlier. He was otherwise asymptomatic, and his medical history revealed that he habitually bit his tongue. Examination of the tongue revealed a nontender, smooth-walled, translucent, bluish, fluctuant mass of approximately 8 mm in diameter that was resting on an opalescent base. The mass was diagnosed as a mucocele of the salivary glands (glands of Blandin and Nuhn). Commonly found in children, mucoceles develop when a salivary-gland duct is severed and secreted salivary mucin accumulates in the surrounding tissue. Historically, repetitive cheek or lip biting is a finding very commonly associated with this condition. Mucoceles may occur anywhere in the mouth where salivary glands exist, such as the lower lip, buccal mucosa, tongue, or oral floor. When discovered on the retromolar pad, they must be biopsied to distinguish them from mucoepidermoid carcinoma. In this case, the mucocele was excised and has not recurred.

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