

Maxillofacial Unit

Apicectomy

This leaflet has been designed to improve your understanding of any forthcoming treatment and contains answers to many of the commonly asked questions. If you have any other questions that the leaflet does not answer or would like further explanation please ask

The problem

An infection has occurred at the tip of the root of one of your teeth. Sometimes this does not cause any symptoms but usually people are aware of discomfort and occasional episodes of swelling, gum boils or bad taste. You may well already have been given a course of antibiotics in an attempt to treat the infection in the short term, though this is not a permanent cure.

Why do I need treatment?

If left untreated the infection is likely to develop into an abscess or cyst. As well as causing pain this can lead to the loss of bone surrounding the root. As a result the tooth can become loose and the adjacent teeth could become damaged.

What does treatment involve?

Your dentist will have already tried to get rid of the infection by removing the nerve of the tooth and placing a root filling. Apicectomy is a treatment of last resort and in most cases, it is better if your dentist tries to re-root treat the tooth or refer you to an endodontist (a specialist in carrying out root fillings). Sometimes, it is impossible to improve on the previous root filling, or they may be a metal post inserted into the tooth, which cannot be removed without breaking the root. In this case your options would include having the causative tooth removed, or attempting surgery around the tip of the root. If this is the case, you will be referred to be assessed for a procedure called an "apicectomy".

This involves cleaning out the infection from the bone, removing a small portion of the tip of the root of the tooth and then sealing the root with a small filling.

It is necessary to make a small cut in the gum over the root of the tooth and then lift the gum off the bone. The area of infection is uncovered by removing a small amount of bone with a drill. Any infected tissue is thoroughly cleaned away from the tip of the root before 2-3mm of the root tip are removed. The root is sealed with a small filling. The gum is then stitched back into place with dissolvable stitches that take around two weeks to disappear. The whole procedure will take around an hour from start to finish.

Apicectomy procedures are generally only offered for upper front teeth and occasionally lower front teeth. It is essential that the tooth has good periodontal (gum) health and a sound restoration in place prior to surgery, this will be assessed at your initial appointment.

What type of anaesthetic is used?

Usually an apicectomy is carried out under a local anaesthetic, ie. an injection into the gum that numbs the area. This anaesthetic will prevent you feeling any pain during the procedure. The procedure can feel lengthy but is generally not uncomfortable, you may find bringing headphones so you can listen to music helpful.

What can I expect after the operation?

When the local anaesthetic wears off a few hours after surgery there will be some discomfort. The discomfort is usually worse for the first few days although it may take a couple of weeks to completely disappear. You may require a day or two off work during which time you should avoid strenuous exercise. Antibiotics are not usually required.

Some swelling is likely to occur both inside and outside the mouth after surgery. This is usually most noticeable for the first two to three days. It is important to keep the site of surgery as clean as possible for the first few weeks after surgery. If it is difficult to use a toothbrush the area can be kept free of food debris by gently rinsing with a mouth wash or warm salt water (dissolve a teaspoon of kitchen salt in a cup of warm water which has previously been boiled) commencing on the day after surgery. Placing a cold compress on the area outside the mouth shortly after surgery can help reduce any swelling, never use heat on the area after surgery.

What are the possible problems?

It is unusual for the area to bleed after surgery but should this happen, it can usually be stopped by applying pressure over the area for at least 10 minutes with a rolled up handkerchief or swab. If the bleeding does not stop, please contact the department.

Lifting the gum to uncover the root of the tooth can occasionally lead to a numb feeling in the gum. This usually disappears after a few months. Some teeth are closer to nerves that run in the jaw bone, for this reason we may advise against undergoing an apicectomy procedure for certain teeth.

Because the gum is cut it can occasionally shrink back a few months after surgery as scar tissue forms. This is not normally a problem but if the tooth has been crowned the edge of the crown may become exposed.

Even if all the infection is successfully removed it can sometimes return months or even years later. If this happens it might be necessary to have the operation repeated but sometimes the tooth is better removed.

Supporting Doctors and Dentists in Training

We train undergraduate and postgraduate medical and dental students.

This means that doctors and dentists in training may be a part of your care and treatment.

All trainees are supervised closely by a fully qualified clinician. Please speak to one of our team if you have any questions or would prefer not to have a trainee involved in your care.

This leaflet is specific to the practice of Oral and Maxillo-Facial Surgery in the United Kingdom and is in addition to the generic guidance given in the GMC publications of Good Medical and Surgical Practice 2001 & 2002

If you have any comments about this leaflet or the service you have received you can contact :

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Telephone (01484) 355737

www.cht.nhs.uk

If you would like this information in another format or language contact the above.

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obraťte se prosím na výše uvedené oddělení

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danych kontaktowych

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