



# Apicectomy

## Information for patients from Head and Neck

You have developed an infection at the tip of the root of one of your teeth. This leaflet aims to help you understand the treatment you now need 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 explanations please ask a member of staff.

### What are the symptoms?

Sometimes this infection does not cause any symptoms but usually people are aware of discomfort and occasional swelling, gum boils, or a bad taste in their mouth.

### 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 your tooth will become loose.

### What does the 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. The infection now needs to be removed surgically in a procedure called an **apicectomy**. This involves cleaning out the infection from the bone, removing a small part of the tip of the tooth's root, and sealing the root with a small filling.

It is necessary to make a small cut in your gum, over the root of your 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 two to three millimetres of the root tip is removed.

The root is then sealed with a small filling and the gum is stitched back into place with dissolvable stitches that take around two weeks to disappear.

### How long will the procedure take?

The whole procedure will take around 45 to 60 minutes from start to finish.



### What type of anaesthetic will be used?

Usually an apicectomy is carried out under a local anaesthetic (an injection into your gum which will numb the area). This will prevent you feeling any pain during the procedure.

### How will I feel after my operation?

When the local anaesthetic wears off, a few hours after surgery, you will feel some discomfort. If it is likely to be very sore your surgeon will give you some painkillers. It might also be necessary to take a course of antibiotics, but this will be discussed with you after your procedure.

The discomfort is usually worse for the first few days, although it may take a couple of weeks to completely disappear. There can be swelling both inside and outside your mouth after surgery; this is usually for the first two days.

### How do I care for my wound?

It is important to keep your wound site as clean as possible for the first few weeks after surgery. If you find it difficult to use a toothbrush, the area can be kept free of food debris by gently rinsing with a mouthwash or warm salt water (dissolve a teaspoon of kitchen salt in a cup of warm water), starting the day after surgery.

### When can I continue my normal activities?

You may need a day or two off work and you should avoid any strenuous exercise during this time.

### Are there any risks/complications?

- 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 hankie or swab. If the bleeding does not stop please contact the unit (see contact details on the discharge sheet given to you after your surgery).
- This surgery can occasionally lead to your **gum feeling numb**. This usually disappears after a few months.
- Your gum 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 you may now be able to see the edge of the crown.
- Even if all of the **infection** is successfully removed it **can sometimes return** months or even years later. If this happens it might be necessary to repeat the operation but sometimes the tooth is better removed.

### What if I have any questions or concerns?

If, after reading this, you still have questions or concerns please speak to a member of the healthcare team responsible for your care.

**This leaflet has been produced with and for patients**