

Apicectomy

What is it?

Teeth are held in the jaw by their roots.

At the core of each tooth is a soft mass of tissue called the dental pulp. In a healthy tooth, the pulp contains living fibres, cells, nerves and a blood supply, extending into the root(s) through the root canal(s).



Tooth decay or injury can destroy the living pulp. Dead pulp is more prone to infection, leading to an abscess and toothache. This can usually be dealt with successfully by root canal treatment (also known as root filling or endodontics).

Sometimes infection can persist at the end of the root and in the surrounding bone. In such cases, the dentist has to carry out an apicectomy.

What will my dentist do?

- Give a local anaesthetic to numb the area around the infected tooth, so that the procedure is painless.
- Make a small cut in the gum, well away from the crown of the tooth to reach the tip of the root.
- Move a small flap of gum to one side, and make a small 'window' in the bone, to uncover the infected area
- Clean out the infection and cut off the tip, or 'apex', of the root
- Put a small filling at the end of the root canal to seal it.
- Stitch the gum back in place.

You may feel some pressure and hear instruments being used, but you should not feel any pain during an apicectomy.

After treatment you will need to keep the area clean.

- For the first day, rinse with warm salt water several times a day, especially after meals. Use half a teaspoon of salt in a glass of luke warm water.
- Brush the teeth normally, but be very careful not to disturb the wound.
- The next day, continue rinsing and begin to gently brush the teeth next to the healing wound.

There may be slight discomfort- an ice pack wrapped in a towel applied to the outside of the face can help. Medicine to manage pain can be taken as advised by the dentist. It usually takes about a week for an apicectomy to heal.

How does it help?

- An apicectomy stops pain.
- An apicectomy saves a tooth that would otherwise have to be taken out.