

MAXILLOFACIAL UNIT

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APICECTOMY (APICAL SURGERY)

What is an apicectomy?

This is a surgical procedure to remove the tip of the root of a dead tooth within the jaw bone and any associated infection.

Why is an apicectomy necessary?

When a tooth is badly decayed, has a large filling or receives a blow in an accident, the soft tissues within it (the pulp) may die. This dead tissue must be removed to prevent infection and this is usually undertaken by a procedure called root canal treatment. Sometimes this treatment is unsuccessful, and the infection persists at the tip of the root. This may sometimes cause pain, but more often the infection will spread and cause a small spot or gumboil next to the tooth. An apicectomy is the operation designed to remove this infected part of the root tip. Usually a small filling is also placed in the end of the root to seal it. This operation is the “last attempt” to save your tooth. It is successful in the majority of patients but sometimes, despite our best efforts, the tooth may eventually be lost.

How much of the tooth root will be removed?

Only the very tip of the root is removed, usually about 2-3mm.

Will the apicectomy make the tooth loose?

Teeth often feel slightly loose for 3-4 weeks after an apicectomy until new bone grows around the tooth root. Then they usually become firm and more comfortable.

How will the surgery be carried out?

An apicectomy is usually carried out under local anaesthetic (“injection in the gum”). You may be offered intravenous sedation (“needle in the arm”) as well as local anaesthesia, and this will calm you and make you forget the operation.

What should I expect after the surgery?

There is usually some swelling of the face and discomfort in the mouth for 3-4 days. The tooth itself may also be tender.

Will I be given advice after the operation?

Full instructions will be given for aftercare following the apicectomy. Remember to take it easy for a few days after the surgery.

Review appointment

It is important that you attend this appointment which is usually 7-10 days after the operation. Stitches may need to be removed and a check made that healing is satisfactory. The surgeon will usually wish to see you again 3-4 months later for an x-ray to check that the bone has healed satisfactorily.

If you have any further questions please ask the Surgeon responsible for your care.

