



Bradford Teaching Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Maxillofacial Unit • Patient Information Leaflet

Advice for Patients Prior to an Apicectomy



This leaflet has been designed to improve your understanding of your forthcoming treatment and 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.

What is an apicectomy?

It is a surgical procedure to remove the tip of the root of a dead tooth within the jaw bone and any associated infection or cyst (fluid -filled sac).

Why do I need treatment?

When a tooth is badly decayed, has a large filling or has suffered trauma the living tissue (nerve and blood vessels) inside your tooth can die.

The dead tissue is usually removed by your dentist to prevent and/or remove any infection/cyst associated with it. This is done via a procedure called root canal treatment. Unfortunately sometimes this does not work and the infection or cyst persists.

If left this can sometimes cause pain and a gum boil may form on the gum by the tooth. This is when an apicectomy may be appropriate.

An apicectomy is usually the last attempt to save a tooth.

What does the treatment involve?

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-similar to a dental drill. Any infected tissue is thoroughly cleaned away from the tip of the root before 2 to 3mm of the root tip is 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.

What type of anaesthetic is used?

Usually an apicectomy is carried out under a local anaesthetic, i.e. an injection into the gum that numbs the area. This anaesthetic will prevent you feeling any pain during the procedure.

What are the possible problems?

- **Bleeding** – This should have stopped by the time you leave the surgery. Should the area bleed again when you get home this can usually be stopped by applying pressure over the area for at least 30 minutes with a rolled up handkerchief or gauze. If the bleeding does not stop, please contact the department, Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm on 01274 365200. Out of hours contact number 01274 542200 and ask for the Oral & Maxillofacial SHO on call. We use the BT Text Relay service for patients who are deaf or have hearing difficulties. To contact us ring 18001 before the numbers above.
- **Infection** – Is relatively uncommon but it can occur if good oral hygiene is not maintained or if you smoke.
- **Altered sensation** – 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.
- **Gum recession** – Because the gum is cut it can occasionally shrink back from your teeth and expose the root. If the tooth has been crowned the edge of the crown may become exposed.
- **Failure** – 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 more than likely the tooth is better removed.

What can I expect after the operation?

- **Discomfort** – When the local anaesthetic wears off a few hours after surgery there will be some discomfort. If it is likely to be very sore your surgeon will arrange pain killers for you. The discomfort is usually worse for the first few days although it may take a couple of weeks to completely disappear.
- **Few days off work** – You may require a day or two off work during which time you should avoid strenuous exercise.
- **Swelling** – Some swelling can occur both inside and outside the mouth after surgery. 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) commencing on the day after surgery.
- **Loose tooth** – Teeth often feel loose for a few weeks after the apicectomy until new bone grows around the root. They then usually become firm and more comfortable

Wristbands

When you are in hospital it is essential to wear a wristband at all times to ensure your safety during your stay.

The wristband will contain accurate details about you on it including all of the essential information that staff need to identify you correctly and give you the right care. All hospital patients including babies, children and older people should wear the wristband at all times.

If you do not have a wristband whilst in hospital, please ask a member of staff for one. If it comes off or is uncomfortable, ask a member of staff to replace it.

Smoking

Bradford Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust is a smoke-free organisation. You are not permitted to smoke or use e-cigarettes in any of the hospital buildings or grounds.

If you need this information in another format or language, please ask a member of staff to arrange this for you.

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