

## What is an apicectomy?

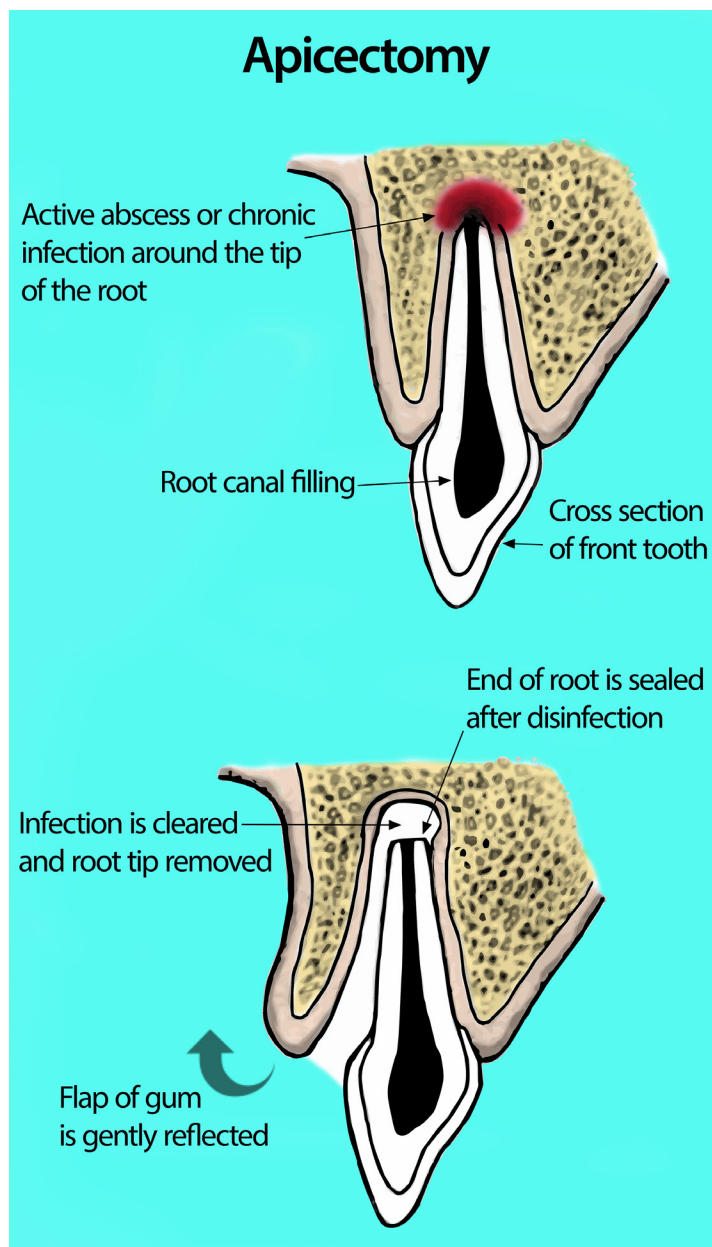
An apicectomy is the removal of the tip of the root of the tooth, known as the apex.

This minor surgical operation is performed if infection or cysts continue to be a problem after root canal treatment or if your dentist is unable to seal the root tip with a normal root filling. An apicectomy is usually carried out under a local anaesthetic. Apicectomy will not eliminate infection without a root canal treatment being in place first

## What is involved?

The surgeon will numb the tooth and the surrounding area. A flap of gum is lifted and the tip of the root and a small amount of surrounding bone and infected tissue are removed.

The area is cleaned and disinfected. The tip of the tooth root is cut back by a few millimetres. Sometimes a small filling is placed in the root to seal the end of the tip. The gum is stitched back into place using dissolvable stitches.



## What to expect afterwards?

You may wish to have someone with you, especially when you leave hospital.

You may need to take time off work afterwards because you will have some discomfort and swelling for several days. We will give you advice about taking painkillers and looking after the surgical area.

If your doctor prescribes antibiotics, please complete the course and follow the instructions carefully.

Should there be any mild bleeding around the gums after the procedure, use the clean swab of gauze you have been given in clinic or a clean small cloth to apply firm pressure to the area for 15 minutes. Please avoid the use of tissues. Repeat as necessary.

Avoid smoking as this can delay healing.

You should expect a small amount of gum recession around the apicected tooth, especially if it is a 'cap' or crown, and you may have a faint scar line higher up on your gum.

## Apicectomy

### Risks and complications

All surgery has risks and complications, but there are a few associated with this procedure in particular:

- The procedure may not be successful, especially if the existing root filling is poor, or the tooth root is split or damaged.
- You should expect the gum around the tooth to recede slightly.
- You may have to have the operation repeated which can reduce the chances of keeping the tooth long-term.
- With upper teeth, the infection can enter the sinus area and cause further problems.
- In the lower jaw, there is a small possibility of injury to the sensory nerves. This may cause numbness or tingling of the lower lip and tongue. It may take several weeks to recover and in rare instances, the numbness may be permanent.

### Is there any alternative treatment?

We would not recommend leaving the infected root in place as this risks allowing infection to spread. One alternative option would be to re-do the root filling. However, this may be impossible, for example if a 'cap' or crown with a post has been placed over the tooth. The other option would be to take the whole tooth out (extraction), as this will remove the cause of the infection.

### Further questions

It is important that you understand what this procedure involves and have talked through any concerns with your doctor beforehand.

If you have any questions either before or after your treatment, please ask a member of the medical or nursing staff or telephone

**Switchboard**  
**Tel: 01342 414000**

And ask for the maxillofacial secretary of your consultant.

For urgent enquiries out of office hours, please ask for the maxillofacial doctor on duty.

**Please ask if you  
would like this leaflet  
in larger print or a  
different format.**

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