

Apicectomy

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, usually carried out under a local anaesthetic, is performed if infection or cysts persist after root canal treatment or if your dentist is unable to seal the root tip with a normal root filling.

An apicectomy cannot eliminate infection without a root filling, which must be carried out 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 root is cut back by a few millimeters. 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?

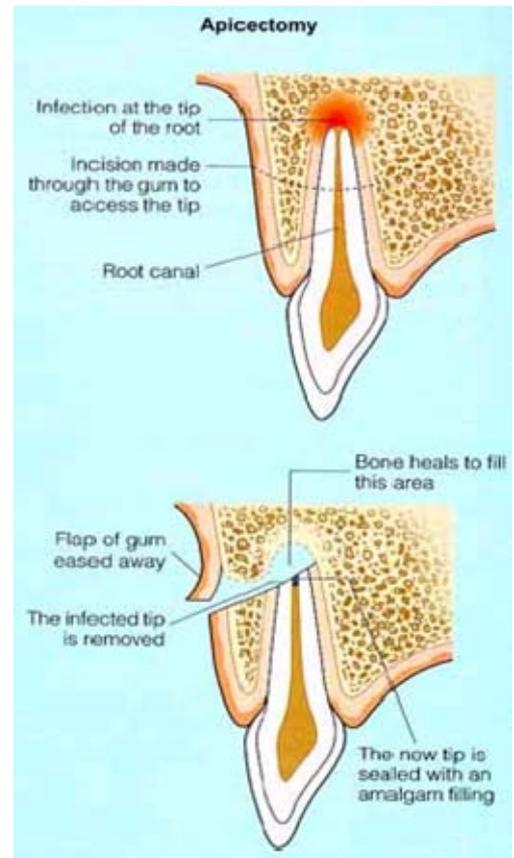
You may wish to have someone with you, especially when you leave hospital.

You may need to take time off work afterwards because some discomfort and swelling is to be expected for several days. Advice will be given about taking painkillers, and you may need antibiotics. Please complete the course and follow the instructions carefully. [Female patients - please note that some antibiotics may interfere with the action of the contraceptive pill. It is advisable to take alternative contraceptive measures.]

Some bleeding may occur as the local anaesthetic wears off. Use gentle pressure for five minutes by biting gently on a clean handkerchief. Repeat this procedure if necessary. If you are still concerned about the bleeding, please contact the hospital.

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 there may be a faint scar line higher up on your gum.



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 pre-existing root filling is poor or it has split/damaged the tooth root.
- You should expect a small amount of gum recession.
- You may have to have the operation repeated which can reduce the prognosis for 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-situ as this can be hazardous by 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 or worries either before treatment or afterwards, please ask a member of the medical or nursing staff or telephone

Switchboard

Tel: 01342 414000

and ask for the maxillofacial secretary of the named consultant. For urgent enquiries out of hours, please ask for the maxillofacial doctor on duty.

Please ask if you would like this leaflet in larger print or an alternative format.