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Apicectomy



Patient information

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You have been referred to us with a dental problem. An infection has occurred at the tip of the root of one of your teeth; sometimes this does not cause any symptoms, but usually people are aware of discomfort, swelling, gum boils or bad taste. Your dentist will have already tried to get rid of the infection by removing the nerve of the tooth and placing a root filling, that is root canal treatment.

This leaflet has been designed to improve your understanding of your forthcoming treatment and has answers to many of the commonly asked questions. Please ask if you have any other questions would like further explanation.

Why do I need treatment?

If left untreated the infection is likely to develop into an abscess or cyst. As well as pain this can lead to the loss of bone surrounding the root. As a result, the tooth will become loose.

What does treatment involve?

The infection now needs to be removed surgically in a procedure called an “apicectomy” which involves cleaning out the infection from the bone, removing a small portion of the tip of the root of the tooth and then sealing the root with a small filling.

A small cut is made in the gum over the root of the tooth and then the gum is lifted off the bone.

The area of infection is uncovered by removing a small amount of bone with a drill and any infected tissue is thoroughly cleaned away from the tip of the root before 2-3mm of the root tip are removed.

Then the root is sealed with a small filling. The gum is stitched back into place with dissolvable stitches that take around two weeks to disappear. The procedure will take around 30 minutes from start to finish.

What type of anaesthetic is used?

Usually, an apicectomy is carried out under local anaesthetic, ie an injection into the gum that numbs the area.

You may be admitted to Day Surgery to have the procedure done under a General Anaesthetic depending on difficulty of treatment. If this is necessary you should be able to go home the same day, once you have recovered from the anaesthetic. You will need to make arrangements for someone to collect and be with you for 24 hours after discharge.

What can I expect after the operation?

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 painkillers for you, and it may also be necessary to take a course of antibiotics. The discomfort is usually worse for the first few days although it may take a couple of weeks to completely disappear.

You may require a day off work during which time you should avoid strenuous exercise. Some swelling can occur both inside and outside the mouth after surgery. This is usually most noticeable for about two days.

It is important to keep the site of the 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 warm salt water (dissolve a teaspoon of kitchen salt in a cup of warm water) commencing on the day **after** surgery.

Are there things I should do when I get home?

- Be careful not to bite numb areas of your mouth,
- For 24 hours avoid rinsing your mouth out vigorously as this may cause bleeding,
- You should clean your teeth normally, including those teeth next to the site of the biopsy,
- To prevent infection or food catching around the stitches, gently rinse three times a day with warm salt water (dissolve a teaspoon of kitchen salt in a cup of warm water) commencing 24 hours after surgery,
- Eat soft foods which can be mashed by a fork. Cold things like ice cream can be soothing.

Are there things I should avoid?

- No activity that can increase heart rate such as heavy lifting or exercise for 24 hours after surgery,
- No alcohol or smoking for minimum three days after procedure,
- No rinsing for 24 hours after the procedure,
- Avoid touching the surgical area with tongue or fingers.

What are the possible problems?

- It is unusual for the area to bleed after surgery but should this happen, it can usually be stopped by applying firm pressure over the area for at least 10 minutes with a rolled-up handkerchief or swab,
- If the bleeding does not stop, please contact the department,
- 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,
- Because the gum is cut it can occasionally shrink back (recede) a few months after surgery as scar tissue forms,
- 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 sometimes the tooth is better removed,
- avoid hot drinks for 24 hours after the procedure.

How to contact us

Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery

[Watford General Hospital](#)

Vicarage Road

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Monday to Friday, 9.00am – 5.00pm

Tel: 01923 217205

Hospital switchboard: 01923 244366 - Ext. 3855

After 5pm and at weekends

Northwick Park Hospital

Tel: 020 8864 3232

Ask for bleep number 900, ask for the Oral Surgery SHO on call

PALS

If you need this leaflet in another **language, large print, Braille or audio version**, please call **01923 217198** or email westherts.pals@nhs.net.



Language



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Survey - Friends and Family Test

We welcome feedback about your care, this feedback is shared with all staff we can improve patients' experience. Click this [link](#) or use the QR code with your smartphone.



For more information, on our Patient Advice and Liaison Service, visit our [website](#).
Or type in: bit.ly/4o3QVFJ

Where can I park?

Car parking at Watford General Hospital is available in the [multi-storey car park](#). It's pay on exit, so you only pay for the time you need. You can pay by cash or card. The post code for the car park is **WD18 0LT**.

The external car park ticket machines on all sites **only accept cash**. However, you can pay by card via the [Saba parking app](#) (excluding AMEX), or search Saba parking app at the [App store](#) or [Google play](#).

Please note: due to current redevelopment works at St Albans, parking is very limited.

For more information about travelling to our sites and travel concessions, visit our [website](#).

Department	Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery
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