

APICECTOMY

Notes for guidance

Our teeth are vulnerable to infections, especially when we do not properly care for them. When the roots of our teeth are the source of that infection, one of our options is to undergo a root canal; however, root canals do not always solve the whole problem. When the infection is based around the very tip of the root, an apicectomy may be the best solution available.

Is apicectomy right for you?

Apicectomy is not a solution that you want to choose unless you have consulted your dentist and tried other alternatives. By the time he or she suggests having this procedure done, you can be sure that your dentist is convinced this is the right choice for dealing with your problem. If you choose not to have an apicectomy, you may continue to have pain and may even end up losing the affected tooth because the untreated infection will result in bone loss around the area.

What is apicectomy?

Apicectomy is the removal of an infected area at the tip of your tooth's root. Usually, this procedure is done after a root canal has failed to eliminate all of the infection that is present.

Like a root canal, the apicectomy will be performed in your dentist's office. You will be given a local anesthetic to numb the area so you won't feel what is happening, but you will be awake. Most apicectomies only take around 30 minutes to complete.

Are you a good candidate?

You are a good candidate for an apicectomy if you've continued to have pain or discharge around your infected tooth even after a root canal has been performed. If you've never had an apicectomy done on that particular tooth previously, then your chances of success are greater. The risks of failure increase with each time the procedure is performed.

As with any similar type of procedure, the healthier you are the better. Your dentist will want to make sure that you do not have any health problems which might interfere with your ability to heal properly.

You may also be a good candidate for apicectomy if your dentist does not feel a root canal is a good option for dealing with your problem.

How is the procedure performed?

First, your dentist will use a fine needle to administer the local anesthetic directly into your gums. Once he or she is confident that the area is numb and you are relaxed, your dentist will make a cut into your gum so it can be pulled away from the bone which will allow him or her to reach the root of your problem tooth.

Next, your dentist will use a drill to create a small hole in the bone covering the tooth's root. Any of the area around the root which is infected is cleaned away and the tip of the root is finally removed.

Finally, the hole is sealed up and the gum is closed with stitches.

How long will it take before I feel normal again?

After the anesthetic wears off, you will experience some pain from the procedure. Most dentists will give you prescription painkillers to ease your discomfort, and you will probably be required to take antibiotics as well in order to fight infection.

For the first couple of days, you may notice some swelling around the procedure area which may even be visible externally. This is normal and will go away gradually as healing continues. During these initial first days, you may want to schedule some time off from work so you can recuperate.

For the next several weeks, you'll want to concentrate on keeping that part of your mouth as clean as possible by either brushing or by rinsing with warm salt water, especially after meals. Although most of the pain will subside in the first week, your gums may still feel sore for the next few weeks.

After about a month, the pain should be completely gone, the healing should be finished (this generally only takes about a week), and you should be able to eat normally.

Are there any risks?

The most serious risk involved with the procedure is from the anesthetic; however, this is true for any surgery and complications from local anesthetic are rare. You also have a risk of failure, with only three-fourths of apicectomies being successful. If you're having your second or third performed on the same tooth, then the success rate is going to be even lower.

Other than these complications, there are two other more minor issues to consider. One is bleeding after the surgery but this can be stopped by applying pressure to the area. The other is numbness in the gum which is generally temporary and goes away after the first few months.

Will I be happy with my results?

If your apicectomy is successful, you should be happy with the results for several years. After the area has healed, the roots will probably be infection free for quite a while, maybe permanently. Unfortunately, these problems do have a tendency to reoccur and the procedure may need to be repeated in the future. By seeing your dentist regularly and having yearly exams, you will be able to ensure good, healthy teeth.

Further Information

This brochure has been prepared to give a basic understanding of the procedure before a consultation takes place, and to cover many of the questions frequently asked about this type of cosmetic surgery. Final decisions should not be made until an individual assessment has taken place with the surgeon.

There is no obligation on the part of the patient to undergo surgery by attending for consultation.

If you have any further questions or would like to arrange a consultation please fill in the online form on our website at www.surgeryone.co.uk. All enquiries are always treated confidentially.