

## **Apicectomy**

### **Q1. What is an apicectomy?**

A1. It is the surgical procedure for the removal of an infection around a root tip which has not healed after root canal treatment. The apicectomy is usually completed with a small filling at the end of the root called retrograde rootfilling.

### **Q2. Why do I need an apicectomy?**

A2. This treatment is required when you have developed an infection on the end of the root of a rootfilled tooth which is crowned or bridged with a post in the root canal. The infection develops due to a loose and leaking root canal filling.

The normal treatment for an infection or abscess on a root would be to replace the rootfilling but in this case the rootfilling cannot be replaced due to limited access if for example there is a long, strong post, firm in place, in the root canal, which is difficult to remove. A trial to remove the post would jeopardise the tooth and could fracture the root. This means that the access to remove and replace the loose root canal filling is very limited and more or less impossible. The only option in this case is to do an apicectomy in order to remove and cure the infection without removing the tooth.

Usually you would have noticed some discomfort from the infected area and possibly a swelling in the gum but sometimes a small fistular opening (sinus) develops above the tooth and you don't feel any pain as the pressure from the infection and swelling will ease off. You may have a bad taste in your mouth that is caused by pus which is leaking out through the bone and gum from the area of infection on the root. Although in some cases you may not be aware of it.

Antibiotics are likely to have been prescribed but have been unsuccessful in removing the infection. If left untreated you could get an abscess and if the abscess increases in size, it could lead to bone loss which ultimately loosens the tooth.

### **Q3. What happens during an apicectomy?**

A3. To begin with you will be given a local anaesthetic to numb the area. Then your dentist will make a small incision in the gum over the root of the tooth. A small amount of the bone will be removed to access the infected root. Any infected tissue is then cleaned from the area before the tip of the root is removed. The tip of the root is sealed with a filling and the gum is then stitched back in place. You will need to come back for a review approximately 7-10 days later to have any remaining stitches removed.

### **Q4. How long does it take?**

A4. You will need two appointments for the treatment.

The first appointment will take approximately 30 minutes upto 1 hour depending on which

tooth and the accessibility to the root. This is when your dentist will perform the main procedure.

7-10 days later you will need to come back for a review and removal of stitches.

Q5. Does it hurt?

A5. No, you will be given a local anaesthetic before the treatment begins so your mouth will be numb for the whole procedure. After the local anaesthetic has worn off you may experience some discomfort however you can take painkillers to help. Any discomfort will reduce over time as it heals.

Q6. Is there an alternative treatment?

A6. If an apicectomy is not done then the infection will spread and you would need to have the tooth extracted.