

Apical Periodontitis

You will shortly undergo surgical treatment for apical periodontitis. This leaflet provides you with information about the procedure.

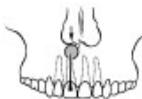
The nerve in a tooth or molar sometimes dies. This can happen, for example, after a fall or a blow to a tooth. This can also happen after a large filling or crown has been made. The tooth or molar may become discoloured as a result. If a dentist finds that a nerve has died, this is treated with root canal treatment (root treatment).

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However, it is not always possible to clean a root canal all the way to the apex. For example, a tooth or molar may have a severely curved apex, or a root canal may have split into several small canals at the apex. If the root canal is not entirely clean, the apex may become inflamed. Apical periodontitis may also occur long after a root canal treatment. A black area near the apex then frequently shows up on an X-ray. This black area means that the local jawbone has been replaced by inflamed tissue.

The inflammation sometimes spreads outwards. A pimple (fistula) on the gums can then be seen around the apex. A small amount of pus is sometimes discharged by the fistula. An apical periodontitis often doesn't cause any problems for patients.

However, such an inflammation will not go away by itself. There are several treatment options for an apical periodontitis. If a patient does not have any complaints, one can adopt a wait-and-see attitude. However, there is the risk that the inflammation will flare up at some point, causing pain and swelling. If the tooth or molar is going to be restored (e.g. with a crown), it is always better to immediately treat the apical periodontitis. The dentist may then try to clean the root canal again.



The objective is to remove the cause of the apical inflammation. If this is not possible, a root apex treatment (apex resection) may be carried out, in which case the apical periodontitis is operated on.

The Operation

Under local anaesthesia, an incision is made in the gums around the tooth or molar that is to be treated. The dental surgeon folds the gums back and then removes the apical periodontitis with a drill.

To make sure that the inflammation will not reoccur, the apex of the tooth/molar is slightly shortened. The apex is closed with filling material.

The wound is rinsed and sutures are placed in order to close the wound. Absorbable sutures are usually used for this purpose. These disappear spontaneously after about 1-2 weeks and therefore do not have to be removed.



After the Operation

An X-ray is taken immediately after the operation to see if the apex has properly closed. A prescription for painkillers is written out, and you can return home. Painkillers are administered before the anaesthetic has worn off.

Swelling

Swelling may occur after treatment. You can limit the swelling to a large extent with ice cubes. Put the ice cubes in a plastic bag wrapped in a flannel and place this on the part of the face concerned. It is best to start with the ice immediately after treatment and repeat this at intervals during the rest of the day. Don't sit with your face in the sun and don't go to a solarium for a few days after treatment. Swelling could start again as a result of the heat.



The swelling usually reaches its peak after two days.

It then disappears spontaneously within a few days in most cases. You can simply brush your teeth and molars with a toothbrush. You are advised not to smoke or drink any alcohol during the first few days after the operation, since this will have a negative effect on the wound's healing process.

If the wound heals properly, the gums will heal after about two weeks. The small hollow in the jawbone where the inflammation was removed will spontaneously fill up with bone after a while. To check if this is the case, an X-ray is taken about six months after treatment.

You may feel numbness in your lip for several weeks after a root apex treatment in the lower jaw. Normal sensation usually returns within a few months. This starts with a tingling sensation in the lip.

Contact

If you have any problems, please contact the clinic:

- during office hours, (0318) 43 51 40.
- at night and at the weekend, (0318) 43 58 05.

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