



## Patient Information Leaflet

# Apicectomy

Cork University Dental  
School & Hospital



This leaflet has been designed to explain an apicectomy and it contains answers to many frequently asked questions. If you have any other questions that the leaflet does not answer, or if you would like further information, please ask us.

### **What is an apicectomy?**

An apicectomy is a minor surgical procedure which is performed to treat infections around the roots of teeth which have died. It is done when root canal (re)treatment has already been tried but has failed to get rid of the infection.

### **What does an apicectomy involve?**

An apicectomy involves a number of steps -

- lifting a flap of gum around the tooth being treated
- removing some bone to reach the infected area
- cleaning the infected area
- locating the tip of the root
- cutting off of the infected root tip - usually 2-3 mm
- sealing the root tip with a filling
- closing the gum with dissolvable stitches

### **Are there other options?**

An apicectomy is usually the only treatment available when other treatments have failed and the area is still infected. Removing the tooth is the only other option.

### **Does it always work?**

No. The success rate varies from 44-95% depending on the individual situation. If your surgeon discovers during the procedure that the root is broken, then the tooth will need to be removed. If it is a front tooth, this can be organised on a separate visit to allow a temporary replacement to be made.

### **What are the risks?**

As with all surgery there is a risk of pain, swelling, bruising, bleeding and infection. Other risks include -

- Your gum may shrink back a little as it heals. If there is a crown on your tooth the margin of the crown may become visible above the gum line in your mouth.
- There may be damage to the sinus cavity near your nose. Your surgeon will tell you if this is likely to happen.
- Numbness or a change in the feeling in your lips or gums. This can happen if the nerves in the area are stretched or damaged and it can be temporary or permanent.

### **What sort of appointment will I need?**

There are usually three options – depending on how difficult the procedure will be. These appointment options are:

**1. Local Anaesthetic** – an injection into your gum to make the area completely numb - just as you would have for a filling with your own dentist. This is suitable for most apicectomies.

**2. Local Anaesthetic with Sedation** – an injection into your arm or a gas to breathe to help you feel more relaxed during treatment.

**3. General Anaesthetic** – you are put to sleep completely in a hospital theatre. This is generally used if the apicectomy is likely to be very difficult.

### **Will I need a follow-up appointment?**

Yes. The tooth will be examined and you will have an x-ray taken approximately 3 months after the surgery. Failure of the treatment is a possibility. This may become obvious either immediately or many years later. If the apicectomy is not a success then usually the tooth will need to be removed.

**This leaflet is available online at <http://www.ucc.ie/en/dentalschool/patients>**