

Minor Oral Surgery under Local Anaesthetic

Information for patients

Removal of teeth under local anaesthetic

Before the tooth extraction process, the surgeon will anaesthetise ("numb up" or "freeze") the tooth that will be removed, the jaw bone and the surrounding gum.

What is involved in removing a tooth?

Most extractions are straightforward and take only a few minutes. Whilst you should expect no pain during the procedure, you will feel pushing, pressure and may hear noises. If your tooth is broken down some extra steps (surgery) may be necessary such as a small cut in your gum over the tooth or removal of bone around the tooth. The tooth may also need to be cut into 2-3 pieces to make it easier to remove. This is done using a drill. Removing a tooth surgically is a short procedure – normally less than 30 minutes. You may need 1-2 stitches afterwards - these should dissolve in about 2 weeks and in most cases, these do not need to be removed.

What are the alternatives?

The alternative to surgery is to leave your tooth/teeth/root(s) in place with no treatment. However, a decayed tooth/root can cause a number of problems including:

- Repeated attacks of infection around the area which causes swelling and pain
- Food getting stuck in the area.

What are the potential risks and side effects of minor oral surgery?

- **Pain and swelling** - it's likely that you will have some discomfort and swelling after surgery which is usually worse for the first three days
- **Bleeding** - as with most surgical operations there is a risk of bleeding from the operation site during and after surgery
- **Infection** - this may develop after an extraction. This is a common complication
- **Dry Socket** - this can occur when the **blood clot** within the healing socket is disrupted and most commonly occurs two to five days following an extraction. The bone is exposed and you may experience intense throbbing and aching. The risk is significantly increased if you smoke before or after surgery.
- **Numbness of lower lip, chin and tongue - this risk is usually associated with the removal of lower wisdom teeth.** There are two nerves which lie very close to the roots of the lower wisdom teeth. One supplies feeling to your lower lip, chin, gums and lower teeth and the other supplies feeling to your tongue and helps with taste. Sometimes these nerves may get bruised when a wisdom tooth is removed which can cause tingling or numbness in your lip, chin, gums or tongue. In rare cases, you may feel pain or notice altered taste. These nerve complications are relatively common initially but are usually temporary. Recovery time can vary and in some cases, can take months. However, in a smaller number of cases the damage to the nerve may be permanent

- **Sinus problem** - sometimes the cheek sinuses will be opened after the removal of upper back teeth as they are close to the roots. This creates a connection between your mouth and nose allowing the passage of liquids between the two. Some of these holes close on their own but some may need an operation
- **Damage to nearby tooth or filling** - occasionally when a tooth is removed the tooth or filling next to it may become chipped or loosened and this will require management by your own dentist
- **Lip soreness and bruising** - while the tooth is being removed there will be some pressure or stretching of your lip. This may cause temporary bruising
- **Stiff jaw** - during the operation, the muscles of the face may be stretched which causes the jaw to feel stiff after surgery. Jaw stiffness normally settles within 2-4 weeks.

What are the expected benefits of treatment?

- To prevent further infections
- To reduce the chance of unexplained pain
- To avoid cavities in wisdom teeth and the teeth around them
- To avoid cheek biting.

What should I do before I come into the dental hospital?

- Please avoid smoking for at least 72 hours before your operation to reduce the risk of infection and pain. This will not guarantee that you will be trouble-free after the surgery, but does reduce your chance of problems
- Please eat and drink normally before your operation
- Please do not drink any alcohol for 24 hours before your procedure
- Please take your tablets and medication as usual, **unless specifically told otherwise.**

What if I can't make my appointment?

If you cannot attend an appointment, please contact the administration team so we can offer you an alternative appointment. The contact details are below.

How will I feel afterwards?

- Your mouth will be numb and the numbness will take a couple of hours to wear off. Please do not eat or drink until you get feeling back in your mouth. You may have some stitches, you will be given instructions as to whether they are to be removed or are dissolvable
- Most patients do not require time off work after minor oral surgery. However if the surgery is extensive or you suffer complications it may be necessary. We will normally warn you if this is likely but it is not possible for us to predict how long this should be as it can be variable
- You should be fit to drive home, but may feel happier with an escort. They will have to wait in the waiting room while the procedure is being carried out.

What should I do when I go home?

- You will be given aftercare advice and a printed instruction sheet. It is important that you follow this advice. Please feel free to ask questions if anything is unclear
- If you are responsible for a minor it may be advisable to make alternative arrangements for their care during your appointment and for the first hour or so after the procedure
- If you are returning to work immediately after the extraction and your job involves heavy lifting or exertion, it may be advisable to transfer to light duties for the rest of the day.

What if my condition worsens whilst waiting for treatment?

If you experience problems whilst waiting for your appointment, visit your dentist who will be able to help.

For further information, please contact:

Department of Oral Surgery
Edinburgh Dental Institute

Telephone: 0131 536 1129

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