

# Dental Abscess



A dental abscess is a collection of pus in the teeth or gums.

This happens when you have an infection in your mouth.



Dental abscesses can be very painful and make you feel ill.



If you do not treat a dental abscess, it will get worse, and the bone around the abscess could be destroyed.



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# Symptoms



If you have a dental abscess, you will feel a throbbing pain in your tooth.

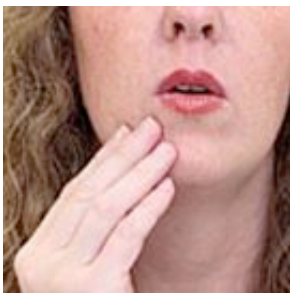


The pain may come on quite quickly, and it will get worse the longer it is left.

You may find that the pain spreads to the surrounding areas:



- Ear



- Lower jaw



- Your neck on the same side as the painful tooth



- Soreness of your tooth and the area around it (especially when biting something).



- Your teeth hurt when you have hot or cold food.



- A horrible taste in your mouth



- Fever (high temperature)



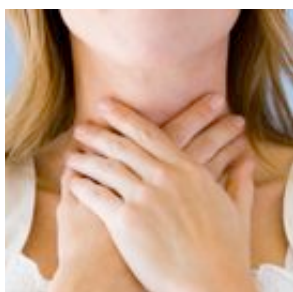
You may also feel:



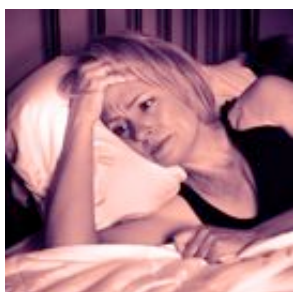
- Unwell



- It is difficult to open your mouth



- It is difficult to swallow.



- It is difficult to sleep.



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# Different Types of Dental Abscesses



A dental abscess happens when bacteria infects the inside of your tooth.

There are 2 different types of abscesses:



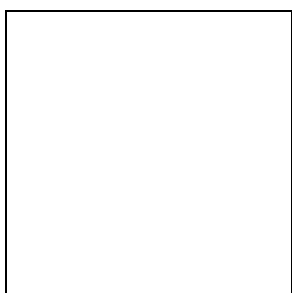
**The most common is called a periapical abscess**



This happens when you have a hole in the outside layer of your tooth (the enamel).



Bacteria gets through and works its way into the centre of the tooth (the pulp). This is where the nerves and tissue are.



The bacteria infects the pulp and then reaches the bone that surrounds the tooth.

This is where the periapical abscess forms.



**The second most common form of abscess is a Periodontal Abscess**



A periodontal abscess happens when your gums get infected (gum disease).

The gum disease causes your gums to become inflamed (hot, swollen, red).



This can make the gum around the root of your tooth move away from the bottom of your tooth.



This makes a tiny gap that can be very difficult to keep clean.



The periodontal abscess is made by the build up of bacteria here.



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# Diagnosis (Finding out you have an abscess)



If you think you may have a dental abscess, you need to see your dentist immediately.



You may need emergency treatment.

You can get this from:



- Your normal dentist.



- Your local Dental Access Centre.



- The Accident and Emergency (A+E) department of your local hospital.



If you are having breathing or swallowing problems, you should go straight to the Accident and Emergency (A+E) department of your local hospital.



If you cannot see your dentist straight away, go and see your doctor.

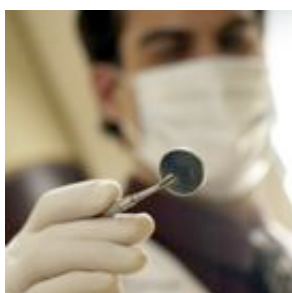


Your doctor will not be able to make the abscess better.

But, your doctor can give you medicine to help with the pain.



Your doctor may suggest you go for treatment in hospital if you have a dental abscess that it is really bad.



The only way to make a dental abscess better is by going to the dentist.



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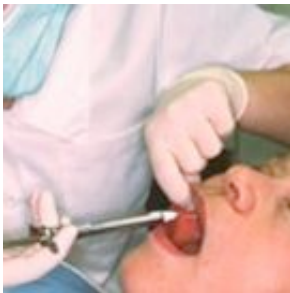
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# Dental Treatment



The first step is to take away the abscess.

The pus contains the infection, and it needs to be drained away.



The dentist will usually do this when you are under 'local anaesthetic'.

This means you will be awake, but your mouth will be numb (have no feeling).



## Treating a Periapical Abscess



Your dentist will drill into your bad tooth to release the pus.



You dentist will remove any damaged tissue from the centre (pulp), leaving a space.



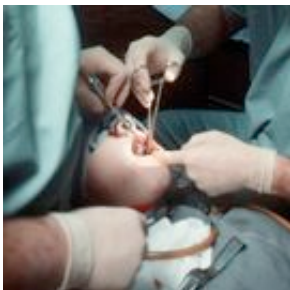
A root filling is then inserted into the space to stop the infection coming back.



**Treating a periodontal abscess**



Your dentist will drain the abscess to let the pus out and clean the area.



**Surgery**



If your **periapical** abscess comes back you may need to see to an oral (mouth) surgeon who may reshape your gum tissue.

This will make sure that the gap is removed fully so that no infection can get in.



In some cases, if your tooth is so badly damaged, it may need to be totally taken out.



### **Treatment From Your Doctor**



If you have a dental abscess, you may not be able to see a dentist straight away.



If this happens, your doctor may give you some medicine to stop the pain.



## Painkillers



A dental abscess can be very painful.



You can buy painkillers from your local pharmacy.

This may be helpful if you are waiting to see your dentist.



However, it is important to remember that painkillers will not cure your tooth problem.

You still need to see your dentist to do this.



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## Self Care



### Things you can do to help:

While you wait to see the dentist, there are things you can do so that your tooth does not hurt so much:



- **Do not** drink food and drink that may be very hot or too cold.

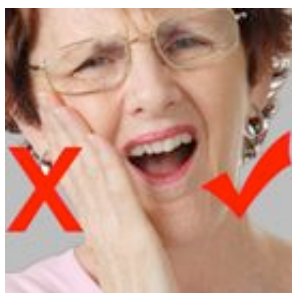


- **Do not** floss around the affected tooth



- **You can** eat cool, soft foods





- **You can** try eating on the other side of your mouth



- **You can** use a soft toothbrush



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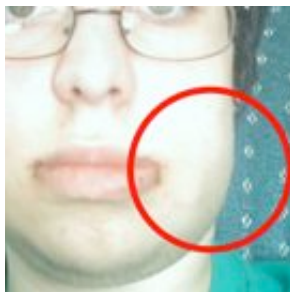
## Antibiotics (a type of medicine)



Antibiotics are used to stop the spread of the infection.  
They can be taken together with painkillers.



Your doctor may suggest you use antibiotics if:



- Your face is swollen.



- You have a fever as well (or swollen glands).



- Your immune system is weak (the way your body fights off disease and infections).
- e.g. if you are having chemotherapy, or are HIV-positive.



- You have other health problems (such as diabetes).



**You must see a dentist if you have a dental abscess.**



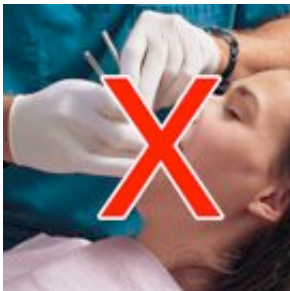
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# Complications



Dental abscesses can easily be made better, with the right treatment.



However, in rare cases, complications can happen.

This is usually when an abscess is not treated.



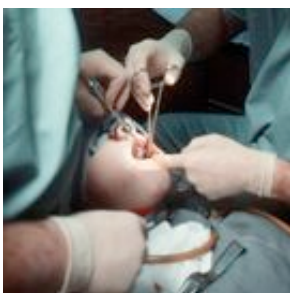
## Dental Cysts

If you don't treat your abscess, a cavity (hole) full of liquid can form at the bottom of the root of your tooth.

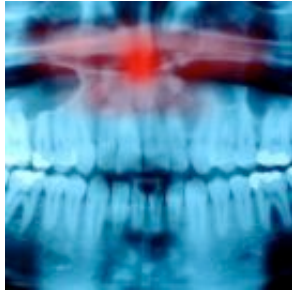
This is called a cyst.



A Cyst can get infected and need treatment with antibiotics (medicines).

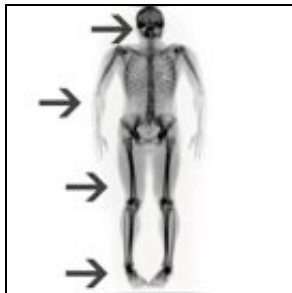


You can have a Dental Cyst removed by an operation (under local anaesthetic).



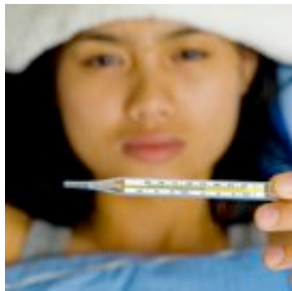
## Osteomyelitis

This is an infection of the bone.



This can be any bone in your body.

(This is because the bacteria in a dental abscess spreads via your bloodstream.)



It can give you a fever (high temperature), nausea (feeling sick) and severe pain in the bone around the abscess.



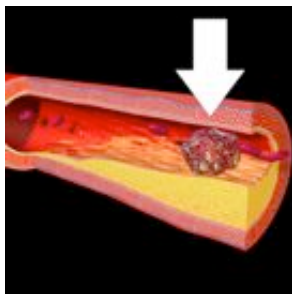
This can be treated by taking antibiotics through your mouth or by an injection.



## Cavernous Sinus Thrombosis



This is very rare (unusual).



The bacteria make the blood clot (form a lump) in a vein at the bottom of your brain.



This can be treated with antibiotics (medicines) or surgery.



In the worst case, you could die from this. **So you must get this treated!**



## Ludwig's Angina



Ludwig's Angina is a serious infection under your tongue.

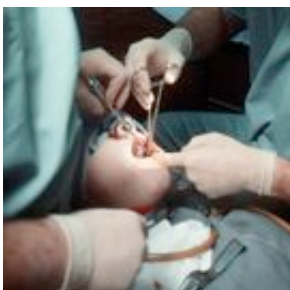


This can be treated with antibiotics (medicines).



It causes swelling and pain under your tongue and in your neck.

In worst cases, it can make breathing difficult.



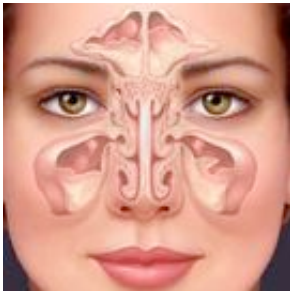
If you are having difficulty breathing, you may need to have emergency operation.



**People can die from this, so you must get it treated.**



## **Maxillary Sinusitis**



This is an infection of the spaces behind your cheekbones.



It is not serious, but it can cause fever, pain and tenderness across your cheeks.



Often it will clear up without treatment.

If it does not, antibiotics (medicine) may be helpful.





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