

Managing toothache at home during the Coronavirus pandemic

Following guidance from the Health & Social Care Board, dental practices have been advised to **PRIORITISE URGENT TREATMENT** and **STOP GENERATING AEROSOL SPRAYS** during treatment.

As well as reducing risk to staff and patients, this will also prevent unnecessary travel in an attempt to reduce virus transmission in our community.

This information aims to advise and support patients on how to manage dental pain and problems at home until routine treatment resumes.

If you require further advice or assistance contact the practice on 02871 262402. A dentist will then assess and advise where appropriate.

If your problem is deemed urgent, the dentist will offer you an appointment at the practice or refer you to the local Urgent Dental Centre if required.

What counts as a dental emergency?

<u>Urgent Dental Treatment</u>	<u>Straight to A&E</u>	<u>Non-urgent (likely to require self-help and home management until routine treatment resumes)</u>
<p>Facial swelling extending to the eye or neck.</p> <p>Bleeding following an extraction that does not stop after 20 minutes of solid pressure with gauze/clean tissue. A small amount of oozing is normal (as if you grazed your knee).</p> <p>Bleeding due to trauma.</p> <p>Tooth broken and causing pain, or tooth fallen out.</p> <p>Significant toothache preventing sleep, eating, associated with significant swelling or fever that cannot be managed with painkillers.</p>	<p>Facial swelling affecting vision, breathing or preventing mouth opening (more than the width of 2 fingers).</p> <p>Trauma causing loss of consciousness, double vision or vomiting.</p>	<p>Loose or lost crowns, bridges, veneers.</p> <p>Broken, rubbing or loose dentures.</p> <p>Bleeding gums.</p> <p>Broken, loose or lost fillings.</p> <p>Chipped teeth with no pain.</p> <p>Loose orthodontic wires.</p>

Painkillers

Painkillers should always be taken in accordance with instructions on the packet. Taking too many tablets or taking medications incorrectly **will not improve your symptoms** and can cause serious stomach and liver injury which can **be life threatening**.

Anti-inflammatories (such as Ibuprofen) can help reduce sensitivity from teeth. In fact, combining Paracetamol and Ibuprofen has been shown to very effective against toothache.

There is currently no strong evidence that drugs like Ibuprofen can make COVID-19 worse.

Avoid taking Ibuprofen if you have symptoms of coronavirus, but otherwise it is safe to do so - unless your doctor has advised you otherwise.



Toothache

Sensitivity- Desensitising toothpastes- such as Sensodyne -Repair and Protect or Rapid relief can help

Brush twice daily with desensitising toothpaste. Spit excess out, but do not rinse after. Then rub toothpaste directly onto the affected area using a clean finger and again do not rinse afterwards. This can be left on overnight.



Extreme sensitivity to hot, cold or sweet- suggests decay or a possible crack preser

antibiotics will not help. The decay/crack must be removed, and the tooth filled.

Until this can be arranged (when routine treatment resumes) it is vital to ensure good oral hygiene,- twice daily brushing with a fluoride toothpaste, once daily flossing or another form of interdental cleaning coupled with reducing the frequency and the amount of sugary foods/drinks consumed to mealtimes only. This will stop the decay from getting any worse.

If there is a hole in the tooth, or a tooth has cracked and is now sensitive and/or sharp- a temporary filling can be packed into the space to reduce discomfort and prevent the situation worsening. These are widely available from supermarkets and pharmacies.

Anaesthetic gels such as **Orajel** can help ease pain or toothache also.



Clove oil can help but it is important to apply directly into the cavity and avoid contact the gums/cheek/lips and this can cause burns.

Wisdom tooth pain

Wisdom tooth pain is usually caused by inflammation of the gum over the erupting tooth- this is known as **pericoronitis** and can be worsened by trauma from biting/eating.

Most flare ups can be managed with good home care and should settle in a few days to a week: Excellent cleaning (even when it is painful to brush, the area must be kept free from food/plaque and debris to encourage healing- a soft/baby toothbrush may help. If unable to brush entirely, an antibacterial mouthwash such as Corsodyl can help.)

Warm salty mouth-rinses after meals to remove food/debris from underneath the gum flap

Soft diet- will reduce trauma/discomfort from biting

Pain killers- Paracetamol or Ibuprofen following packet instructions

If you have difficulty swallowing, swelling in your face or cheek or difficulty opening your mouth, call your dentist. You may need antibiotics if the infection is spreading.

Ulcers/Sores

Ulcers can be very painful, but most will heal within 7-10 days. Non-healing ulcers/oral lesions present for more than 3 weeks must be assessed by a dentist or doctor.

Excellent cleaning (even when it is painful to brush, the mouth must be kept clean to encourage healing and prevent more ulcers from forming- a soft/baby toothbrush may help. If unable to brush entirely, an antibacterial mouthwash such as Corsodyl can help.)

Warm salty mouth-rinses after meals to remove food/debris from underneath the gum flap

Soft diet- will reduce trauma/discomfort from eating and maintain fluids

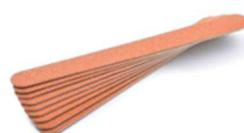
Pain killers- Paracetamol or Ibuprofen following packet instructions

Diffiam (Benzydamine) spray or mouthwash as required- can help numb the area to improve comfort when eating/drinking.

Rubbing dentures- if your ulcers/sores are caused by loose or rubbing dentures consider use of a denture adhesive such as **Fixodent** which can help secure the denture to prevent rubbing but also cushion the soft tissues and reduce discomfort.

If there are any sharp or rough edges present on the denture- an emery board can be used to smooth these.

You should remove dentures where possible if they are still causing trouble.



Bleeding gums

This is **NOT** a dental emergency.

Bleeding gums are usually caused by inflammation of the gums due to poor brushing/oral hygiene. This will not stop until brushing improves.

Brush twice a day with a fluoride toothpaste. Brush for 2 minutes each time and concentrate the toothbrush on the gum line where the gum meets the teeth.

Use floss or interdental brushes to clean between each tooth at least once daily. Initially bleeding may increase as the gums are inflamed but if you continue with this regime it should resolve in a few days.

Pain or bleeding after an extraction

Post op pain following an extraction is **normal and expected**- Continue to take regular painkillers as required for several days after an extraction.

Some pink spit/oozing is normal after an extraction, but if the socket is bleeding freely- bite hard on gauze or a clean tissue for 20 minutes. If bleeding persists- call your dentist.

If you smoke, or rinse too soon after an extraction, you risk developing a **dry socket**-usually 3-4 days after the extraction has taken place.

This can be very painful and regular painkillers are unlikely to be effective.

Contact your dentist if you are concerned about a possible dry socket- you will require a dressing to cover the exposed bone.

Antibiotics will not help unless there is infection present.

Lost crown or bridge

- 1) Check the crown- if it is hollow, you can attempt to re-cement it at home if you feel confident to do so.
 - 2) Remove any debris from inside the crown- you can use the tip of a paperclip for example to scrape any old cement away. Brush your teeth and clean the tooth in question thoroughly. **All debris must be removed from both the crown and the tooth for it to seat properly.**
 - 3) Check the crown fits onto the tooth without cement. Bite your teeth together and see if the bite feels right. If it feels too tall, it is not fitted properly, and you must double check for debris on the tooth or inside the crown. **NEVER force a crown or post onto your tooth as this may cause root fracture.** If you cannot get the crown to fit, store it safely and either seal the root with a temporary cement or keep the tooth as clean as possible and wait until you are able to see your dentist.
 - 4) Crowns should be replaced using a dental cement from a pharmacy only. **Do not use superglue** to fit your crown.
 - 5) Once you have practiced placing the crown, dry the tooth and crown, mix the cement as instructed on the packet and fit the crown. Place the crown directly onto the tooth. Bite firmly to press it into place.
 - 6) Remove any excess cement with a toothpick and floss between your teeth to make sure they do not stick together.
 - 7) Avoid eating or drinking anything for 30 minutes afterwards.
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