

Reference source(s)

BMJ, 24 March 2015 called 'Management of severe acute dental infections' by Robertson DP, Keys W, Rautemaa-Richardson R, Burns R, Smith AJ.

Contact details

Contact your dentist on his or her usual number. If you don't have a regular dentist, you can call your local urgent care dental service. If you don't have details of your local urgent dental service, call NHS 111 or contact NHS England on 0300 311 2233.

PALS and Advocacy contact details

Contact details of independent advocacy services can be provided by our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) who are located on the right hand side as you enter the main reception area. PALS are also your first point of contact for health related issues, questions or concerns surrounding RSCH patient services.

Telephone: 01483 402757

Email: rsc-tr.pals@nhs.net

Opening hours: 9.00am–3.00pm
Monday to Friday

If you would like information documents in large print, on tape or in another language or form please contact PALS.

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Dental infections

Accident & Emergency Department



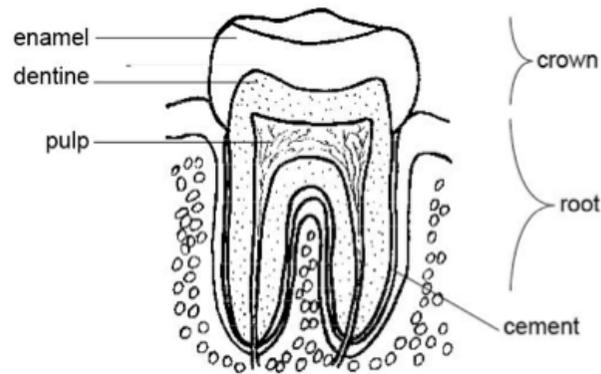
Patient information leaflet

What are dental infections?

Dental infections are common. They develop when bacteria from the mouth invade the tooth root and spread to surrounding tissues. This can cause a severe toothache. Sometimes, infection can spread to the face or rest of the body causing serious infections, especially in people with weakened immune systems.

What causes dental infections?

Poor dental hygiene and tooth decay cause cavities to develop in the enamel of the tooth.



This allows bacteria to enter the tooth pulp space where they multiply and create an infection. When pus accumulates, the infection forms an abscess. Build-up of pressure and the associated inflammatory response can cause intense pain.

Do I need antibiotics?

The majority of dental infections do not require antibiotics. Seeing the dentist is the most important thing, and painkillers such as paracetamol and ibuprofen may be advised to tide you over until seen by the emergency dentist.

How are dental infections treated?

Sometimes dental infections can spread to surrounding soft tissues and this can cause redness and swelling around the tooth affecting the gums and face. This spreading infection may require a course of antibiotics. At risk in this situation are people with a weakened immune system, diabetes and the elderly.

The treatment of a dental abscess is to drain this collection of pus and sometimes removal of the tooth may be necessary to achieve this. Only qualified dentists can provide this treatment.

How do I see the emergency dentist?

Contact your dentist on his or her usual number. If you don't have a regular dentist, you can call your local urgent care dental service. If you don't have details of your local urgent dental service, call NHS 111 or contact NHS England on 0300 311 2233.

When should I return to A&E?

If you go on to develop any of the red flag symptoms below, you should return to A&E for review.

Red Flag symptoms

- Fever
- Rapid heart rate
 - Difficulty or pain on fully opening mouth
 - Swelling under tongue with drooling
 - Swelling and redness around eye
 - Redness around mouth
 - Difficulty speaking, swallowing or breathing
 - Feeling faint
 - Enlarged glands
 - Dehydration

Is there anything else I can do?

Application of oil of cloves to the painful tooth and gum may help give some relief. This oil can be bought from the chemist and placing a few drops on a piece of cotton wool or cotton bud and applying it to the painful tooth and gum may provide some pain relief.