



Patient Information Leaflet

Tooth Extraction

Cork University Dental
School & Hospital



This leaflet has been designed to improve your understanding of having a tooth removed and contains answers to many of the commonly asked questions. If you have any other questions that the leaflet does not answer or would like further explanation please ask.

Why do teeth need to be removed?

Teeth which have decayed (gone bad) can cause pain and infection. If your dentist cannot save the tooth then it needs to be removed. Teeth may also need to be removed if they have been injured or if they are loose because of gum disease.

What will happen if I leave the tooth there?

If a decayed tooth is not removed it can cause an infection around the root of the tooth. This can become very painful or swollen or develop an abscess. If the swelling is very large it can affect your breathing or swallowing but this is very rare.

What is involved in removing a tooth?

Most extractions are completely straightforward and take only a few minutes. You should not feel pain during the procedure but you will feel pressure and hear noises. However, if your tooth is very broken down then some extra steps (surgery) may be necessary. You may need a small cut in your gum over the tooth. Sometimes it is necessary to remove part of the bone around the tooth. Sometimes a tooth will 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 20 minutes and often only 5-10 minutes. You may need 1-2 stitches afterwards - these will dissolve away in about 2 weeks. You will need to keep the area very clean while it heals - your dentist will tell you how best to do this.

What sort of appointment will I need?

There are usually three options – depending on how difficult the extraction will be.

- 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 by far the most common method and suitable for almost all teeth.
- 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 the least common method and is generally only used for teeth that will be extremely difficult to remove.

What should I expect afterwards?

Some slight **bleeding** is normal for a day or so - this is usually easily controlled with pressure over the area.

Some **pain** is normal - your dentist will advise you about painkillers to use and give you a prescription if necessary.

Some **swelling** and **bruising** is normal but the amount varies a lot from one patient to another. Swelling will be at its maximum on the second day and most swelling should have disappeared within a week, perhaps two. With swelling you may also have some difficulty opening your mouth wide but this also generally returns to normal within a week or two. Any **stitches** you have will fall out by themselves in about 10-14 days.

You may need to take **time off** work or school – your dentist will advise you about this.

What are the risks?

Infection can happen but is not common. It is treated with antibiotics.

You may develop a **dry socket**. This happens when the blood clot that should form in the socket does not form properly or falls out for some reason. Dry socket is painful but temporary. If it occurs, you will notice that your pain gets worse rather than better 2-3 days after your tooth was removed. It is treated by your dentist putting a dressing into the socket and prescribing strong painkillers. Dry socket is more common in people who smoke and in women who take the contraceptive pill.

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