What is an Apicectomy?

In most cases a dead tooth can be treated by your dentist with a root filling. Occasionally, this is unsuccessful, or can not be performed and the tooth develops a cyst or chronic infection at the tip of the root. This may need to be removed and is known as an apicectomy. An apicectomy may avoid the extraction of the tooth. An apicectomy may be carried out by your dentist or you may be referred to an oral and maxillofacial surgeon.

What happens during the outpatient appointment?

To make sure that you receive the best treatment for you, your surgeon will take a detailed medical and dental history from you. Your mouth and jaw will be check for swelling, tenderness or any other abnormalities. X-rays will be taken of the affected tooth to help diagnose the problem and determine the best treatment for you.

What are the options?

The surgeon will discuss your options with you after the examination. Options may include removing the tooth, asking your dentist to repeat the root filling or an apicectomy.

How successful is an apicectomy?

Usually this is a very successful operation however, in a small number of cases, the tooth remains tender to pressure or the infection persists. Sometimes it is possible to repeat the operation but it is possible that the tooth may need to be removed.

What happens during an apicectomy?

An apicectomy is usually carried out using a local anaesthetic similar to the ones that you may have had when having a filling. Sometimes it be carried out in the Day Surgery Department using a general anaesthetic. During the procedure the gum is lifted out of the way and the area of infection or cyst is exposed with a drill similar to that used for fillings. The end of the root is then removed and a filling placed to seal the root. Dissolving stitches are used to hold the gum in its original position.
Are there any risks or side effects of the surgery?

- **Infection.** This is uncommon and you will be prescribed antibiotics to take afterwards. It is very important that you complete the course of antibiotics that you are given.

- **Gum shrinkage.** As with all surgery some scarring may occur which can sometimes result in the gums receding. Occasionally this can compromise the appearance of any crowns.

- **Altered sensation.** The root tip can be close to nerves which supply sensation to the area causing numbness or tingling. In most cases this is temporary but very rarely may be permanent.

- **Bleeding.** A certain amount of bleeding is to be expected after the operation but this is unlikely to need treatment.

- **Swelling.** Some swelling can occur both inside and outside the mouth after surgery. This is usually most noticeable for about two days after the operation and settles on its own without any treatment.

- **Pain.** When the local anaesthetic wears off a few hours after the operation, there will be some discomfort. You will probably need to take painkillers such as Paracetamol or Ibuprofen after the operation so make sure that you have a supply of these at home.

**Will I need time off work or school after the operation?**

You may need to take a day or two off work or school after the operation. During this time you should avoid strenuous exercise.

**Questions?**

If you have any problems or questions related to your tooth or operation please contact a member of staff on the number below.