

Managing Toothache at Home

Tips to help manage dental problems until you can see a dentist.

Painkillers

Anti-inflammatories (like ibuprofen) can help reduce sensitivity from teeth. Combining paracetamol and ibuprofen has also been shown to be effective.

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

If you have **no** coronavirus symptoms carry on taking ibuprofen as normal.

So until we have more information, take **paracetamol to treat symptoms of coronavirus**, unless your doctor has told you paracetamol is not suitable for you. (Updated: 20 March 2020)

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**.



Accessing care.

- Following recent guidance from NHS England and the Department of Health, dental practices have been advised to **STOP AEROSOL SPRAYS** and **PRIORITISE URGENT TREATMENT** where possible.
- As well as reducing risk to staff and patients, this will also prevent unnecessary travel in an attempt to reduce virus transmission. This information aims to advise people in pain who still need to access care and also support people in managing minor symptoms at home.

If you need to access emergency care:

- Have you or anyone in your house been self isolating?
- Do you have any symptoms?
- High temperature or continuous cough?

If **YES** to any of the above, **CALL 111**. They will direct you to an emergency facility with appropriate protective equipment which will allow staff to treat you safely.

KEEP CALM AND STAY AT HOME

Toothache

If the tooth is extremely sensitive to hot or cold, **antibiotics will not help**. The decay must be removed and filled.

These home measures may help make symptoms manageable until care can be accessed.

Good cleaning with fluoride toothpaste and reducing sugar intake will help stop decay from getting any worse.

If there is a hole in the tooth, or a tooth has cracked and is now sensitive/sharp, a temporary filling can be packed into the space.

These are widely available from supermarkets and pharmacies.

Desensitising/sensitive toothpaste (like sensodyne repair and protect) can help. Rub toothpaste directly on the affected area and do not rinse afterwards. Anaesthetic gel such as **Orajel** can help ease pain.



What counts as a dental emergency?

Urgent dental treatment:

- Facial swelling extending to eye or neck.
- Bleeding following an extraction that does not stop after 20 mins solid pressure with a gauze/clean hankie. A small amount of oozing is normal, just like if you had grazed your knee.
- Bleeding due to trauma.
- Tooth broken and causing pain, or tooth fallen out.
- Significant toothache preventing sleep, eating, associated with significant swelling, or fever that cannot be managed with painkillers.

Straight to A&E:

- Facial swelling affecting vision or breathing, preventing mouth opening more than 2 fingers width.
- Trauma causing loss of consciousness, double vision or vomiting.

Non-Urgent (may need to wait):

- Loose or lost crowns, bridges or veneers.
- Broken, rubbing or loose dentures.
- Bleeding gums.
- Broken, loose or lost fillings.
- Chipped teeth with no pain.
- Loose orthodontic wires.

Wisdom Teeth

Wisdom tooth pain is usually due to inflammation of the gum over the erupting tooth, which can be worsened by trauma from biting.



Most flare ups can be managed with good home care and should settle in a few days to a week.

Excellent cleaning (even if it is painful to brush, the area must be kept clean to encourage healing)

Corsodyl mouthwash (avoid use for >1week as may cause staining)

Soft diet (soft food will reduce trauma from biting)

Painkillers (ibuprofen or paracetamol following packet instructions)

Warm salty mouthwash

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.

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Ulcers

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

Warm salty mouthwash

Excellent cleaning (even

Soft diet (soft food will reduce trauma from biting)

Rubbing Dentures (Denture adhesives like fixodent may help secure a loose denture. Any