

Smiles Better!

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Antibiotics: *The facts*

Below are a list of the most common questions our receptionist get asked about toothaches and antibiotics. Hopefully the answers to the questions will give you a better idea as to when you might require an antibiotic.

Q. I have a toothache when I eat, especially cold, do I need antibiotics?

A No. You most probably have exposed dentine due to recession of the gum or a cavity (hole) which will require a restoration (filling). Keep it clean, use a sensitive toothpaste and make an appointment to see your dentist.

Q. I have a throbbing toothache which is unbearable to hot, but holding cold water in my mouth around this tooth really helps.

A These symptoms are that of an infected/ inflamed nerve. You possibly have had a deep filling placed or have a large cavity in your tooth, the nerve (pulp) has become irritated and is now inflamed and starting to die. This requires root canal treatment. Your dentist will remove part or all of the nerve at the first visit and place a dressing. The pain should then subside and a further appointment will be needed. At this stage antibiotics are not required.

Q. I came in to see the dentist yesterday with tooth ache, they took the nerve out of my tooth and put a dressing in it, but this morning I woke with a swollen face and I have a temperature. I can't make it to the dentist today because of work, could I get some antibiotics?

A Antibiotics are needed in this case because the patient has a high temperature and localised swelling. We do need to see the patient though before we can give antibiotics as in some cases we can remove the dressing and allow the infection the

come out through the tooth or we can make a little cut into the gum, this will reduce the swelling much quicker than antibiotics alone.

Q. I'm booked in next week to get a tooth out, my friend told me she got an infected socket after she had a tooth out and the pain is more painful than toothache, she had to get antibiotics. Can I get antibiotics to prevent me from having an infected socket?

A No. Antibiotics are not routinely given out pre-op for extractions. If the post op instructions given to you by the dentist are followed you will greatly reduce your risk of infection. Antibiotics are given only when the symptoms of infected socket have been diagnosed. Dentists along with other health professionals have a duty to ensure that antibiotics are only prescribed when needed. A new report by the World Health Organization has set out ways to fight the growing problem of antimicrobial resistance (AMR). AMR occurs when infectious organisms, such as bacteria and viruses, adapt to treatments and become resistant to them.

The publication specifically addressed the long-known problem of antibiotic resistance, where increasing use of antibiotics can lead to the formation of superbugs that resist many of the antibiotic types we currently have. It outlined a variety of measures that are vital for ensuring we can still fight infections in the future and described how other major infectious diseases, such as tuberculosis, HIV, malaria and influenza, could one day become resistant to today's treatment options.

You can do your part by asking yourself if antibiotics are necessary, it is important to remember that antibiotics or other antimicrobials are not always needed to treat our illnesses, and we should not expect them in every situation.