

Smiles Better!

with **Dr. Nuala Devlin**
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OUCH!

Have you ever had a toothache? It is not a pleasant experience and it's a time when you'll be very happy to visit your dentist!

Most dental practices will have time set aside each day (toothache appointments) for those who are in pain and need seen quickly, but what we the dentist classifies as 'toothache' or an emergency might differ from you the patient. We need to prioritise an emergency from a non-emergency so that those who are in pain get seen first.

So if you were suffering from any of the following, the dentist would want to see you that day as their first priority:

- You have a large swelling inside the gum or on the side of face which may be up as far as your eye
- Your having difficulty opening your mouth due to pain
- The pain has kept you awake all night
- The pain doesn't resolve or fade with painkillers
- Having a cold drink and holding it in your mouth helps the pain
- It is sore to press on the tooth
- You have had a fall or been in an accident and have knocked or broken a tooth/teeth

Other problems and toothaches that may occur that would not be seen as urgent:

- Pain on eating which lasts for a few minutes
- A broken filling which is now sensitive
- A tooth throbbing after eating and you are having to take painkillers which are helping

The dentist will try to see you that day, but you may find might have to wait to the following day. My advice would be to use a sensitive toothpaste and try to keep the teeth as clean as you can. You may even find rubbing a little sensitive toothpaste around the sore tooth and leaving it may help. If you are unable to see the dentist for a few days due

to work commitments you could try temporary filling materials that you can buy from your local chemist.

The other main area where people require urgent appointments usually involve a cracked or chipped front or back tooth, a lost crown (cap) or it has come out or a broken denture. There is no pain, but it's the embarrassment of having something broken missing at the front, or the annoyance of your tongue rubbing against it.

Again your dentist will most certainly try to fit you in that day, but they will have to prioritise a toothache from a non-toothache. We do understand though that losing a front tooth whether it be a filling, crown or denture tooth is embarrassing and we will try to see you. If you do have to wait a day why not get a temporary fill or temporary crown cement from your local chemist. I would advise against using superglue.... although I have seen it being used by many patients!

If your teeth are feeling a little sensitive try sensitive toothpaste e.g. Rapid relief, again try to keep teeth clean.

Broken teeth or chipped dentures are difficult as your tongue won't keep away and so you end up with an ulcer on it, hot salty mouthwashes or Difflam mouthwash will help with the sore tongue.

The moral of this story is that it is best to see to dentist regularly to prevent any of the above, but as we all know, accidents can happen! What we don't want you to do is leave your broken tooth till your next check up because it's giving no pain!

Our reception teams have a difficult job trying to fit patients in with toothache, they always sympathise with you and want to help, so hopefully this article will help you understand why they ask so many questions when you call looking for that toothache appointment. **Nuala**