



Tooth Abscess



Overview

This is an infection near the root of a tooth. It's a pocket of pus that can be next to a root, or below the tip of the root. An abscess is painful. If it's not treated, it can lead to serious complications. It can even be life-threatening.

Causes

An abscess forms when bacteria gets through your tooth's hard outer enamel layer. This can happen if you have a cavity, or if you have a crack or a chip in your tooth. The bacteria travels through your tooth's inner layer, called the "dentin," and spreads down to the root.

Symptoms

An abscess causes severe pain. You may feel pain in the tooth, your jaw, your neck and your ear. Your tooth may hurt when exposed to hot or cold, or when you bite or chew. Your face may swell, and you may have a fever. If your abscess bursts, you may have a sudden rush of salty, bad-tasting fluid in your mouth, and your pain may suddenly decrease.

Treatment

An abscess needs to be treated quickly so it doesn't get worse. If not treated, the infection can spread through your body. So if you begin to have symptoms of an abscess, take it seriously. See your dentist as soon as possible. If you can't see your dentist, go to the emergency room. A medical professional can drain your abscess and treat the infection. Sometimes the tooth can be saved, but in some cases the tooth needs to be removed. Talk to your dentist for more information.