



# Simple tooth extraction

Also known as: Pulling teeth • Tooth removal • Dental extraction

## All about pulling teeth

### Did you know?

The average adult ages 20 to 64 has lost seven permanent teeth.

*National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research*

Sometimes a tooth needs to be removed.

### Why pull a tooth?

- **Your mouth is too crowded.** Your orthodontist may recommend pulling a tooth before you get braces.
- **Gum disease has loosened the tooth.** Severe infection of the gums can destroy the support system holding your tooth in place. Removing the tooth, which is usually decayed, can save what bone is left.
- **The tooth pulp is infected.** When root canal treatment is unsuccessful or not an option, pulling the tooth can stop the pain and keep the infection from spreading.
- **You have a compromised immune system.** If you are undergoing chemotherapy or have had an organ transplant, your dentist may recommend pulling a decayed tooth so the infection doesn't spread.



### What if I just leave it?

**If your mouth is crowded:** Not extracting the tooth can cause other teeth to move. It can also make overbites and underbites worse.

**If your tooth is infected:** Leaving an infected tooth can cause the gums and bone to waste away. The longer you wait, the more difficult it will be to place a dental implant in the future. Damaged teeth can also cause you pain and sensitivity, and decay can spread to other teeth.



## Did you know?

Pulling a tooth is a relatively quick process. The longest part of the procedure is usually waiting for the anesthesia to kick in!

### Does it hurt?

No. Before the procedure, your dentist will numb the tooth, gums and bone tissue. You may feel some pressure as the dentist works on the tooth, but anesthesia will keep you from feeling any pain.

### How is the tooth extracted?

Dentists usually use **elevators** and **extraction forceps** to loosen and remove the tooth. The elevator goes between the tooth and the gums to help expand the space around the tooth. Your dentist uses the forceps to grab onto the tooth and pull it out.

### What happens afterwards?

Within the first few hours, the bleeding will stop, forming a clot in the empty socket. This clot is easy to dislodge, so follow these precautions during the first 48 hours:

#### Do:

- bite on a gauze pad until the socket stops bleeding
- use an ice pack and ibuprofen to reduce swelling
- brush and floss your teeth
- rinse gently with warm salty water (after first 24 hours)

#### Don't

- rinse vigorously or use a straw
- drink alcohol or smoke
- brush or floss the empty tooth socket
- exercise (this increases blood flow)

It takes a few weeks for the socket to close up. The smaller the extracted tooth, the faster the healing process. Teeth with two or three roots, like molars, can take longer to heal than front teeth with only one root, because the tooth socket is larger.

## How soon can I get an implant?

It usually takes four to six months for the bone tissue to heal enough to place a dental implant.

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