
INSTRUCTIONS FOR DENTAL INFECTIONS

An infection (abscess) of a tooth or the gums can start out small, but can quickly become quite severe, even requiring hospitalization, if not attended to properly.

Be sure to follow these instructions faithfully. The success of fighting the infection is dependant largely on how closely you follow them. If you have any questions or problems, call your dentist.

- If antibiotics are prescribed, start taking them immediately. Take them exactly as it says on the label. Finish *all* the pills even if you feel better before they are gone.
- If pain medication is prescribed, take it as you need it. Don't exceed the dose on the label. Taking with food or milk will help reduce upset stomach. Avoid driving or operating heavy machinery when taking pain prescriptions.
- Avoid pain medications with aspirin. Nuprin or Advil are good alternatives.
- Use warm saltwater "holds". Mix 1 teaspoon salt in a glass of warm water. Take a mouthful and pouch it in your cheek over the infection area until the water cools; repeat until the water is gone. Doing this every hour helps pull the infection towards the surface of the gums so it can drain. Doing this at the same time as using the cold packs outside of mouth enhances the effect.
- Use cold packs on face over the infected area. Place on face for 15-20 minutes, then leave off for 15-20 minutes.
- *DO NOT* use heating pads on outside of face. This can cause the infection to worsen and spread further.
- Maintain a good, balanced diet, and get plenty of rest. Your body needs extra energy when fighting infections. You may need to eat softer foods.
- Avoid smoking until the infection has subsided. If you must smoke, keep it to an absolute minimum.

Even when following these instructions, it may take at least 24 hours for the infection and discomfort to stop increasing. If you don't get significant improvement within 48 hours, or if it continues to get worse after 24 hours, call your dentist.