

POND SQUARE DENTAL

DRY SOCKET

What is a dry socket?

Dry socket is a common complication after a tooth extraction, where pain increases a few days after the procedure instead of settling. This happens when the protective blood clot in the socket is lost too early or does not form properly, leaving the underlying bone and nerves exposed.

What is normal healing vs dry socket?

Normal healing:

- Mild to moderate discomfort for 1–2 days
- Pain gradually improves
- A blood clot is present in the socket

Dry socket:

- Pain worsens 2–4 days after extraction
- Pain may spread to the ear, temple, or jaw
- The socket may look empty or dry
- Unpleasant taste or bad breath

If your pain is getting worse rather than improving, it is important to seek advice.

What causes dry socket?

It usually develops when the healing clot is disturbed or lost. This may be more likely if you:

- Smoke or vape
- Rinse, spit, or use a straw too soon
- Disturb the area early (for example, brushing directly over the socket)
- Have a difficult or surgical extraction (such as wisdom teeth)
- Get food or debris trapped in the socket
- Have had dry socket before
- Are affected by hormonal factors (such as oral contraceptives)

How is dry socket treated?

A dentist can manage this condition effectively, and symptoms often settle quickly once care is provided.

Treatment may include:

- Gently cleaning the socket
- Placing a soothing medicated dressing
- Advising appropriate pain relief
- Review appointments if needed

What to expect:

- Pain often improves within hours to a couple of days
- Some patients need 1–2 dressing changes
- Healing continues naturally once the area is protected

Are there any risks or complications?

Although not usually serious, it can:

- Cause significant discomfort
- Delay healing
- Require additional dental visits

LOVE YOUR SMILE

How can dry socket be prevented?

First 24 hours:

- Do not rinse, spit, or use mouthwash
- Avoid smoking or vaping
- Do not drink through a straw
- Avoid alcohol
- Do not brush directly over the extraction site

After 24 hours:

- Rinse gently with warm salt water if advised
- Keep the area clean without disturbing the socket
- Eat soft foods and avoid chewing on the extraction side
- Take any prescribed medication as directed

When should I contact the dentist?

Get in touch if you notice:

- Pain that worsens after the first 1–2 days
- Pain spreading to your ear or jaw
- Bad taste or unpleasant smell
- Pain not controlled with recommended pain relief
- Any concerns about healing

Early treatment can relieve symptoms quickly and support recovery.

Key point

Dry socket can be painful, but it is manageable. Recognising the signs early and seeking prompt care helps ensure a more comfortable and predictable recovery.

This leaflet provides general guidance and does not replace individual advice from your dentist. If you have any concerns, please contact the practice.

LOVE YOUR SMILE