

Periodontal Abscess

Immediate treatment necessary

A periodontal abscess is a pocket of pus that typically forms in the tiny space between the gums and the tooth. This space is called the sulcus.

A periodontal abscess should be treated as soon as possible to eliminate pain, stop the spread of infection, prevent tooth loss, and restore the health of your mouth.

Symptoms of a periodontal abscess

You may realize that you have a periodontal abscess if—

- ❖ the affected tooth hurts when you tap or bite on it.
- ❖ the tooth is slightly loose.
- ❖ the gums bleed, and they are swollen, shiny and red, or deep red-blue.
- ❖ you have a nasty taste in your mouth.

It is also possible that you can have a periodontal abscess and experience no symptoms at all.

The causes of a periodontal abscess

There are several conditions that can cause a periodontal abscess. Many abscesses are caused when periodontal infection flares up in a gum pocket and quickly grows, forming a ball of pus. Injured gums can sometimes form an abscess when they are infected by bacteria that live naturally in your mouth, especially if the gums are already affected by periodontal disease.



Popcorn hull trapped in the sulcus



Red and swollen gum tissue caused by a periodontal abscess

Impacted food, often a seed or popcorn hull, can sometimes cause an abscess because the food particle prevents your saliva from flushing out the bacteria and provides fuel for bacterial growth.

Once formed, an abscess might drain through the gums, creating what is commonly called a gumboil. A periodontal abscess can cause pain and swelling and, if left untreated, can cause damage to supporting bone and ligaments in a short period of time. It can also lead to the loss of the affected tooth and sometimes even neighboring teeth.

Diagnosis and treatment

If we suspect that you have a periodontal abscess, we perform a thorough examination. We use a periodontal probe around the teeth and take x-rays to check bone levels. We also look for any pus or discharge.

To treat a periodontal abscess, we must drain it and remove the source of infection. A root planing procedure will drain the abscess, as well as clean plaque and tartar from the root surface. In some cases, we may numb the area and then lance the abscess at its base. Although antibiotics cannot cure an abscess by themselves, they may also be prescribed.

Homecare may include rinsing your mouth with warm salt water or an antimicrobial mouthwash.