

### **What to do if you have a swelling**

Swellings in the mouth and swelling of the face should never be ignored, particularly in children, because most of the time swelling means infection – a dental abscess.

If you have had toothache you may notice that the side of your face has swollen up and/or that a lump has developed on the gum near the painful tooth. Painkillers can help in the short term, but most of the time the best solution is to treat the dental problem.

Using a cold pack – a bag of peas from the freezer wrapped in a towel – held against the side of the face for a few minutes can help reduce the pressure. It is very important not to use anything hot against the swelling because this can make it worse.

Rinsing with warm salt water can help a swelling inside the mouth to drain.

Phone the West Country Dental Care (WCDC) helpline on 0333 405 0290 for an appointment, but if the swelling is so severe that it stops you swallowing or is making it difficult for you to breathe then you should go straight to A&E.

At your emergency appointment with WCDC the cause of the swelling will be diagnosed and x-rays may be needed to confirm the source of the infection. If possible the abscess will be drained under local anaesthetic and this provides immediate relief from the pain as the pressure is released. In many circumstances the problem tooth can be extracted but sometimes antibiotics are needed to bring the infection under control before the tooth can be removed. Every case is individual and your dentist will advise as to the most appropriate treatment for you.

Sometimes facial swelling can appear after dental treatment e.g. if there has been a particularly difficult extraction, but you will have been warned about this and advised about what to do. If this happens unexpectedly then please contact us again.

**To make an appointment please call our call centre on: 0333 405 0290**