



National Dental
Centre Singapore
SingHealth

Cracked Tooth



Cracked Tooth

With increasing life expectancy, dental awareness and knowledge, people are keeping their teeth much longer. This exposes teeth to more years of crack inducing habits such as chewing on hard food and parafunctional habits like grinding or bruxism. These habits make teeth more prone to cracks.

What are the symptoms of a cracked tooth?

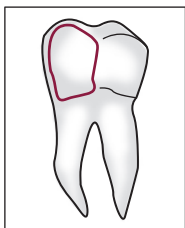
Cracked teeth demonstrate many types of symptoms ranging from discomfort to pain when chewing, pain on release of biting pressure and sensitivity to hot and cold temperatures. Often, these symptoms occur inconsistently, making diagnosis difficult.

What are the consequences of cracks?

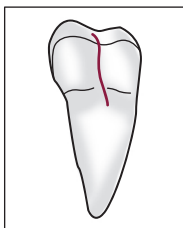
Chewing on a cracked tooth can cause micro-movement of the affected fragments and changes in the dentine and pulp resulting in pulpal irritation. It is the release of biting pressure on the affected tooth that causes the sharp pain experienced by some patients. Over time, the pulp becomes irreversibly damaged and the tooth will hurt consistently even when not in function. Cracks are also pathways for bacteria ingress leading to infection of the pulp and its surrounding tissues.

What are the types of cracks?

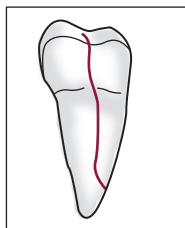
Teeth can crack in several different ways. Cracks may affect the crown, root or both parts of the tooth.



Fractured cusp



Cracked tooth



Split tooth

How will a cracked tooth be treated?

The treatment and outcome for a cracked tooth depends on the type, location and extent of the crack. Not all teeth are amenable to treatment. Split teeth are almost always

doomed for failure. Your endodontist is the best person to advise you on the appropriate treatment.

Usually, there will be a need to stabilize or splint the tooth with a band to prevent further progression of the cracks. Endodontic or root canal treatment is often necessary if there is pulpal involvement arising from the crack. Endodontic treatment will relieve pain and resolve pulpal inflammation and infection but it will not cure cracks, as these are physical defects on the tooth surfaces. When the cracked tooth becomes asymptomatic and has stabilized, a crown will be placed. Placement of a crown provides maximum protection, retards the progression of the cracks but does not guarantee success in all cases.

After treatment for a cracked tooth, will my tooth completely heal?

Treatment for your cracked tooth is important because it will relieve pain and reduce the likelihood that the crack will worsen. Once treated, most cracked teeth will continue to function and provide years of comfortable chewing.

However, it is important to realize, unlike a broken bone, the fracture in a cracked tooth will not heal. In spite of treatment, some cracks may continue to progress and separate resulting in loss of the tooth.

What can I do to prevent cracked teeth?

While cracked teeth are not completely preventable, there are some steps to take to minimize your risk.

- Avoid chewing on hard food or objects such as ice, hard nuts, pens etc.
- Do not clench or grind your teeth.
- If you clench or grind your teeth at night, speak to your dentist about getting a night guard.
- Wear a mouth guard when playing contact sports.



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