

Table 1: Tooth Ache

Symptoms		Likely cause	Initial management suggestions	On-going care
Sensitive to hot/cold/sweet stimuli	Disappears on removal of stimulus	Reversible pulpitis	Avoid foods which provoke pain Analgesics Antibiotics not indicated Cover any obvious cavity (e.g. temporary filling material, chewing gum) Toothache drops	See a dentist as soon as possible
	Persists on removal of stimulus	Irreversible pulpitis	Avoid foods which provoke pain. Analgesics. Antibiotics not indicated. Cover any obvious cavity (e.g. temporary filling material, chewing gum) Toothache drops.	See a dentist as soon as possible
Tender to pressure		Possible early abscess formation	Antibiotics may be indicated.	See a dentist as soon as possible
Tender/painful swelling in region of recent toothache		Dental abscess	Analgesics. Antibiotics probably indicated. If swelling is causing dysphagia/dyspnoea, admit to hospital for aggressive intravenous antibiotic therapy and appropriate supportive management.	See dentist ASAP
Pain persists 1–4 days after dental extraction		Dry Socket	Antibiotics not indicated Flush socket with sterile saline Insert sedative dressing if available	See dentist ASAP