

Tips for Dentists

Telephone Triage

Scenario: You are a dentist on call for your clinic or for a medical emergency room. A patient calls you complaining of dental pain and/or infection.

Follow Algorithm- Ask the following questions:

Can patient be seen within 8 or less hours? Or, will it likely be more than 8 hours?

Provide referral to a dentist or, if you or the patient determines that the situation warrants emergency treatment, to a hospital or urgent care

Triage Questions to Assist with Decision Making

- What is the intensity of the pain on a scale of 0 to 10?
- Are you taking any medication to relieve the pain?
- What meds and what dosage?
- Do the meds relieve the pain?
- Is the pain getting better, staying the same, or getting worse?
- Is there pain to hot or cold liquids?
- Does the pain go away after the hot or cold no longer on tooth?
- Is the pain spontaneous or constant?
- Is the pain dull or sharp?
- Is there pain when you bite down?
- Is there any swelling?
- Is there anything coming out of the area? (Blood, exudate, etc.)

As always, use decision making tools to determine your best clinical recommendation based on what you know and using triage questions to help assess the patient's situation. The goal is to connect the patient to a dentist, whether it is yourself or if you need to provide a referral to another dental clinic for the patient to have an examination and treatment.

Do not prescribe narcotic or opioid pain medications to patients that have no record under your care or with your clinic.

Tips adapted from <http://www.dentaleconomics.com/articles/print/volume-101/issue-1/features/managing-dental-emergencies-successfully.html> .