

Silicon Valley Endodontics & Microsurgery

Jason Kung, DDS, MS — Specialist Endodontist

(669) 234-2354 · 1565 Hollenbeck Avenue, Suite 106, Sunnyvale, CA 94087 · svendodontics.com



Why Antibiotics Can't Cure a Tooth Infection

The bacteria live inside a sealed canal system with no blood supply — where antibiotics in your bloodstream cannot reach. Full guide: svendodontics.com/antibiotics-tooth-infection.

WHAT ANTIBIOTICS CAN DO

- Slow bacteria that have already escaped the tooth into surrounding tissue (cellulitis).
- Buy time when there is facial swelling, fever, or systemic symptoms — while definitive treatment is arranged.
- Reduce the risk of spread in medically compromised patients (uncontrolled diabetes, immunosuppression).

WHAT ANTIBIOTICS CANNOT DO

- Cure the infection inside the tooth — the source is untouched, and symptoms return when the pills run out.
- Replace a root canal, retreatment, or extraction. Recurrence approaches 100% without definitive treatment.
- Relieve pain from an inflamed nerve (pulpitis) — anti-inflammatories like ibuprofen do that; antibiotics don't.

Both the AAE and ADA recommend AGAINST routine antibiotics for a localized dental abscess or toothache in a healthy adult.

WHEN ANTIBIOTICS ARE APPROPRIATE (ALONGSIDE TREATMENT — NOT INSTEAD OF IT)

- Facial cellulitis or rapidly spreading swelling — especially toward the eye, neck, or under the tongue.
- Fever over 100.4°F (38°C), malaise, or tender swollen lymph nodes — signs of systemic spread.
- Immunocompromised patients — uncontrolled diabetes, chemotherapy, transplant medication, high-dose steroids.
- As an adjunct when infection persists after appropriate root canal treatment or drainage.

What actually resolves a tooth infection

Removing the bacteria at the source: root canal treatment (or retreatment of an old root canal), apicoectomy microsurgery when the infection sits at the root tip, incision and drainage of a swollen abscess, or extraction when the tooth cannot be saved. Every course of unnecessary antibiotics also carries real costs — resistance, *C. difficile* colitis risk, allergic reactions, and the false comfort that delays definitive care until the tooth is harder (or impossible) to save.

Been prescribed antibiotics for a toothache? The clock is running — book the definitive fix now.

(669) 234-2354 — same-day emergency slots seven days a week, including Saturday and Sunday 8 AM–3 PM.

Silicon Valley Endodontics & Microsurgery · 1565 Hollenbeck Avenue, Suite 106, Sunnyvale, CA 94087 · svendodontics.com

Consistent with the AAE Guidance on the Use of Systemic Antibiotics in Endodontics and ADA clinical practice guidance on dental pain and swelling. Full sources: svendodontics.com/antibiotics-tooth-infection. General guidance only — if you have trouble breathing or swallowing, or rapidly spreading facial swelling, go to the emergency room now.