

## Re: pain from cracked tooth after onlay

---

*Source:* <http://sci.tech--archive.net/Archive/sci.med.dentistry/2008-03/msg00016.html>

---

- *From:* Steven Bornfeld <[dentalwinmung@xxxxxxxxxxxxxx](mailto:dentalwinmung@xxxxxxxxxxxxxx)>
  - *Date:* Tue, 04 Mar 2008 08:23:43 -0500
- 

martin wrote:

Back in 2004 I had a molar (the one nearest the premolars in my lower left jaw) treated for a crack which ran right through the rear inner (lingual?) cusp. The dentist gave it a Cerec onlay (which reaches down about halfway to the gumline), but before fitting the onlay he showed me the prepared tooth on the monitor, and the crack was still there, stretching in a curve from the cusp across the centre on the tooth.

He said "I'm not going to chase the crack any further down".

In a visit a couple of weeks later, to polish the tooth, he said I'd probably always get 'the odd twinge of pain' from that tooth, as not all of the crack had been removed.

Well, it's held up well for three years, but a couple of months ago, I began to notice quite a lot of pain on biting. Before I had the onlay done, the pain happened when I released the bite (a classic symptom of a cracked tooth, I believe), but now it seems to occur as soon as I bite. Also, I'm noticing that after the sharp pain, a dull pain persists for several hours. Sometime the dull pain just starts for no apparent reason.

I've tested the tooth for sensitivity to hot and cold liquids, and it doesn't seem abnormally sensitive to either (I get some general pain holding cold liquids in my mouth, but I have some gum recession, so it's probably exposed roots).

Any opinions please?

Ordinarily a well-made onlay will prevent the crack spreading further, but your symptoms do suggest either crack or pulpal problems. Distinguishing the two is not so cut and dried as whether there is pressure or rebound pain (my overgeneralization is that biting on a cracked tooth causes sharp pain; biting on an abscessed tooth causes dull, throbbing pain). Of course, one can also have a cracked tooth with pulpal involvement.

These can be difficult cases; it may be perfectly feasible to do a root canal and save the tooth, but if the crack has continued to propagate down the root the tooth may not be worth saving.

Re: pain from cracked tooth after onlay

Your dentist should evaluate the tooth. It may be necessary to remove the onlay to fully evaluate whether the crack has spread. If the crack extends down the root surface you will eventually get some evidence of this on x-ray, possibly including a periodontal abscess.

Sometimes the course of action isn't clear to me; in these cases I weigh the information to be gained by waiting until the problem becomes clear against the level of discomfort the patient is suffering.

Steve