Temporary Filling Fell Out: What to Do | Core Dental

Canonical: https://www.coredental.com.au/temporary-dental-filling-falls-out/

Details:

Don't panic. A temporary filling is a short-term filling placed as part of ongoing treatment, and like any filling it can be replaced. Contact your dentist as soon as you can and book an appointment so that the tooth can be reassessed promptly. Left unprotected, the tooth can break down further, develop sharp edges that irritate your cheek or tongue, or fracture. At Core Dental please call 13 13 16 and tell us what has happened so we can arrange a time to see you.

What is a temporary dental filling?

A temporary dental filling is a non-permanent, short-term filling placed in a tooth as part of ongoing dental treatment. It is intended to be replaced later with permanent treatment, such as a longer-lasting filling or a crown. Because it is designed to be short-term, a temporary filling can wear down or come out before your next appointment.

Why might a dentist place a temporary filling instead of a permanent one?

There are several reasons your dentist might recommend a temporary filling. They include:

managing sensitivity and toothache while the tooth settles

monitoring a deep cavity before deciding on the next step

accommodating time constraints, when a permanent restoration cannot be completed at the same visit

protecting the tooth between stages of a multi-visit procedure, such as root canal treatment

helping anxious patients ease into permanent treatment over more than one appointment

Your dentist will explain why a temporary filling is being used for you and when you should expect to return.

What should you do if your temporary filling falls out?

Stay calm, because a temporary filling can be replaced like any other filling. Contact your dentist as soon as possible and make an appointment so that the tooth can be looked at promptly. Depending on your circumstances, your dentist may advise that the time is right to complete the longer-term treatment instead of simply replacing the temporary filling.

While you wait for your appointment, you can take some simple steps:

Keep the area clean by gently brushing around the tooth, and rinsing with water after meals.

Try to chew on the other side of your mouth, and avoid very hard or sticky foods.

Keep the filling if you find it, and bring it along, although it will usually not be reused.

Call us again if your pain or swelling gets worse, because you may need an earlier appointment.

Call 000 immediately for uncontrollable bleeding, difficulty breathing or swallowing, a serious facial injury or other life-threatening symptoms.

What can happen if you delay treatment?

It is important to have the tooth reassessed soon after you lose a temporary filling. Failing to act quickly could result in:

further deterioration of the tooth, which can create a more serious problem and may mean a larger filling or a crown is needed

fracture of the tooth, because the remaining tooth structure can be brittle. Some fractures leave a tooth that cannot be restored and needs to be extracted. You and your dentist would then talk about what to do about the gap, and depending on the importance of the tooth, an implant or a bridge may be discussed

sharp edges of the tooth rubbing against your cheek, tongue or lip, which can be annoying and may cause a traumatic ulcer

Will it hurt if the filling falls out?

It can. A missing temporary filling can leave rough surfaces and sharp edges that are uncomfortable against your cheek, tongue or lip. The tooth may also be sensitive to hot, cold or sweet foods and drinks while it is exposed, particularly if the nerve was irritated before treatment. If you are anxious about coming back, tell our team. We take time to explain each step before we start.

What happens at your appointment?

Your dentist will look at the tooth, check what is left of the temporary filling, and decide on the next step. This may involve replacing the temporary filling, placing a permanent filling or planning a crown. Your dentist will tell you what the recommended approach is intended to achieve, what alternatives exist, and what risks or limitations apply. At Core Dental we quote before treatment starts, and we offer interest-free payment plans, with terms that apply. HICAPS claiming is available on site.

How can you plan care and make an informed decision?

When you call, describe the tooth, when the filling came out and any symptoms. Bring relevant medical information and a list of your current medicines. A written treatment plan lets you compare stages, expected appointments and payment arrangements before you decide to proceed. For emergencies, we reserve appointments where possible, so please call as early in the day as you can.

Why there is a temporary seal in the first place

A temporary restoration is not a shortcut or a cheaper option. It exists because some treatments are deliberately spread over appointments, and the published advice explains exactly why.

Root canal treatment is the main reason. The Victorian Department of Health describes its disinfecting stage: shaping the canals "involves small instruments, special disinfectants and medication. It may take a few weeks to months for these solutions to take maximum effect against stubborn bacteria within the tooth, and this step may have to be repeated several times." And: "You may need more than one visit to complete the treatment, depending on the difficulty of the procedure."

So the gap between visits is doing work — it is the time the medication needs. A tooth part-way through that process has to be sealed between appointments.

What the final seal is for, in the Department's own words. The fourth aim of root canal treatment is "to make sure no bacteria from the mouth can leak back into the tooth", for which "a large, well-sealed restoration is put on the tooth".

No bacteria from the mouth. That is the job the temporary is holding until the permanent restoration goes on — which is why a temporary coming out is a seal failing rather than a cosmetic inconvenience.

Crowns are the other common reason. "A mould (impression or digital scan) of the tooth is taken and sent to a lab for the crown to be custom-made. A second appointment is usually needed to glue in the crown, so a temporary crown will be provided." The Department notes that "some clinics have lab equipment on site and may be able to finish it on the day", which is the case where no temporary is needed.

For a crowned tooth the preparation has removed "a thin layer of tooth ... from the top and all around the tooth", so there is a reduced tooth underneath waiting to be covered.

And ceramic veneers follow the same pattern. "For ceramic veneers, a mould (impression or digital scan) of the tooth is taken and sent to a lab for the ceramic to be custom-made. A second appointment is usually needed to glue in the ceramic."

Sources: Better Health Channel (Victorian Department of Health), Root canal treatment, betterhealth.vic.gov.au (reviewed 14 July 2025); Cosmetic dentistry and teeth whitening, betterhealth.vic.gov.au (reviewed 12 December 2025). Both accessed 6 November 2026.

What to do, and the thing not to do

The published instruction is short. What it is protecting against is the part worth understanding.

The instruction. "Fillings also sometimes fall out. If part of your filling breaks off or if your whole filling falls out, see your oral health professional as soon as possible."

As soon as possible — not at the next scheduled appointment in the sequence. If you are part-way through a treatment, the practice needs to know that the seal has gone before the next planned visit.

What is being kept out. The Department's account of the mouth is that millions of bacteria "live in your mouth and stick to your teeth in a soft build up called dental plaque", that they turn sugar into acid as a waste product, and that this acid "dissolves the crystals of your teeth and causes mineral loss, weakening the tooth". Against a tooth whose canals have been opened and are mid-disinfection, that is precisely the traffic the seal was placed to stop.

And what the Department says about letting decay continue. "The longer the decay is left untreated, the further it spreads into the tooth. Early detection and treatment help preserve tooth strength and prevent bacteria from damaging its centre."

The symptoms to report. From the Department's pulp list: "unprovoked or spontaneous pain"; "sensitivity to hot and cold drinks and foods"; "pain when biting or chewing"; "loosening of the tooth"; "swelling of the gum near the affected tooth"; "oozing of pus surrounding the affected tooth"; "facial swelling". Its warning about where untreated infection goes is that an abscess can spread "into the surrounding bone which can become severe", with listed complications including bone loss and loss of the tooth.

The thing not to do: wait for pain as the signal. "Sometimes, tooth pulp may become damaged or diseased without any symptoms." And its general caution applies: "Having no pain does not always mean that your teeth and mouth are healthy."

What we are not going to tell you. No source we hold describes a temporary filling material, a home repair product, or any interim technique — so we are not going to invent one. Whether anything can be done at home in your particular case is a question for the practice treating you, and they have your

treatment sequence in front of them.

What does apply in the meantime is the Department's ordinary care advice, slightly more carefully than usual: brush twice a day with "a toothbrush with a small head and soft bristles" and fluoride toothpaste, "spit out the fluoride toothpaste - do not swallow it, and do not rinse with water", keep sweet things to mealtimes since "the more frequently you eat or drink sugary things, the more often the bacteria produce acid", and drink "some tap water to wash sugars out of your mouth" if you cannot brush after something sweet.

And for context on the treatment you are part-way through. Root canal treatment succeeds for most people — "about 90 to 95 per cent of people who undergo root canal treatment can expect a functional tooth after the treatment" — and afterwards "the treated tooth should last a very long time, provided that you maintain good oral hygiene, avoid consuming too much sugar and have regular dental check ups". Completing the sequence is what gets you there.

Sources: Better Health Channel (Victorian Department of Health), Dental fillings, betterhealth.vic.gov.au (reviewed 1 August 2025); Root canal treatment, betterhealth.vic.gov.au (reviewed 14 July 2025); Tooth decay, betterhealth.vic.gov.au (reviewed 28 June 2025); Teeth and mouth care, betterhealth.vic.gov.au (reviewed 25 July 2025). All accessed 6 November 2026.

Frequently asked questions

Is it an emergency if my temporary filling falls out?

It is not usually a life-threatening emergency, but you should contact your dentist promptly. If you have severe pain, facial swelling or fever, tell us when you call so that we can find you an earlier appointment.

Can I put the filling back in myself?

We recommend that you do not. Pushing a filling back into the tooth can trap bacteria and may damage the tooth. Instead, keep the area clean and see your dentist, who can replace it properly.

How long can I wait before getting it replaced?

You should have the tooth reassessed as soon as possible. Waiting increases the chance of further breakdown, sharp edges or a fracture. Your dentist can advise what is reasonable in your situation.

Will I need a crown if my temporary filling falls out?

Not always. Your dentist will examine the tooth and tell you whether a new filling is enough or whether a crown is a better way to protect the tooth. The answer depends on how much healthy tooth remains.

Why was I given a temporary filling in the first place?

Temporary fillings are used to manage sensitivity or toothache, monitor deep cavities, protect a tooth between stages of treatment such as root canal therapy, and spread treatment over more than one visit.

Why was a temporary filling used instead of a permanent one?

Because some treatments are deliberately spread over appointments. For root canal treatment, the Victorian Department of Health notes that the disinfecting stage "may take a few weeks to months for these solutions to take maximum effect against stubborn bacteria within the tooth, and this step may have to be repeated several times", and that "you may need more than one visit to complete the treatment".

What is the temporary seal actually doing?

Holding the job the final restoration will take over. The Department's fourth aim of root canal treatment is "to make sure no bacteria from the mouth can leak back into the tooth", for which "a large, well-sealed restoration is put on the tooth".

Is a temporary crown the same idea?

Yes. "A second appointment is usually needed to glue in the crown, so a temporary crown will be provided." The exception is where "some clinics have lab equipment on site and may be able to finish it on the day".

Do ceramic veneers need a wait too?

Usually. "For ceramic veneers, a mould (impression or digital scan) of the tooth is taken and sent to a lab for the ceramic to be custom-made. A second appointment is usually needed to glue in the ceramic."

What should I do if the temporary comes out?

Contact the practice rather than waiting for your next planned visit. The published instruction is: "If part of your filling breaks off or if your whole filling falls out, see your oral health professional as soon as possible."

What is the risk of leaving it a few days?

Bacteria reaching a tooth that was sealed for a reason. The Department notes that "the longer the decay is left untreated, the further it spreads into the tooth", and that early treatment helps "prevent bacteria from damaging its centre".

What symptoms should I report?

"Unprovoked or spontaneous pain"; "sensitivity to hot and cold drinks and foods"; "pain when biting or chewing"; "loosening of the tooth"; "swelling of the gum near the affected tooth"; "oozing of pus surrounding the affected tooth"; "facial swelling".

Can I assume it is fine if there is no pain?

No. "Sometimes, tooth pulp may become damaged or diseased without any symptoms", and "having no pain does not always mean that your teeth and mouth are healthy".

Is there something I can put in it myself?

No source we hold describes a temporary filling material or a home repair, so we are not going to suggest one. Ask the practice treating you — they have your treatment sequence in front of them.

How should I look after the tooth until the appointment?

The Department's ordinary advice, applied carefully: brush twice a day with a small-headed soft brush and fluoride toothpaste, "spit out the fluoride toothpaste - do not swallow it, and do not rinse with water", keep sweet things to mealtimes, and drink "some tap water to wash sugars out of your mouth" if you cannot brush after something sweet.

Will the treatment still work?

Completing the sequence is what matters. "About 90 to 95 per cent of people who undergo root canal treatment can expect a functional tooth after the treatment", and afterwards the tooth "should last a very long time, provided that you maintain good oral hygiene, avoid consuming too much sugar and have regular dental check ups".

Related services and further reading

Fillings and restorations

What happens when you get a dental filling?

How do I know if I need a filling?

Tooth sensitivity after a filling

Difference between a crown and a porcelain filling

Dental crowns

Emergency dentistry

Root canal therapy

How can we help?

If a temporary filling has come out, or you have a sore tooth that needs attention, our team can see you at any of our nine practices. Call 13 13 16 or book online. You can also read about our emergency dentistry service.

Core Dental at a glance

Nine Core Dental clinics across Melbourne: Southbank, South Melbourne, Caroline Springs, Carrum Downs, Epping, Wyndham, Berwick, Bayside and Glenferrie.

Open six days a week: Monday to Friday 8.00am to 6.00pm and Saturday mornings.

We quote before treatment starts and offer interest-free payment plans.

HICAPS on-site claiming, and bulk billing for eligible children under the Child Dental Benefits Schedule.

Contact Core Dental

Phone	13 13 16

Booking	Online through coredental.com.au, or call 13 13 16
Hours	Monday to Friday 8.00am to 6.00pm, Saturday 8.00am to 1.30pm (Bayside Saturday 8.30am to 1.30pm), Sunday closed
Clinics	Southbank , South Melbourne , Caroline Springs , Carrum Downs , Epping , Wyndham , Berwick , Bayside , Glenferrie

Results, recovery times and potential risks vary for each individual. This information is general in nature and is intended for people over 18. Seek advice from a qualified, AHPRA-registered practitioner before proceeding.

What is a temporary filling used for?

A temporary filling is a short-term filling that protects a tooth during ongoing treatment. Core Dental dentists may use one to manage sensitivity, monitor a deep cavity, protect a tooth between root canal stages or spread treatment over more than one visit.

What should I do first if my temporary filling comes out?

Stay calm, keep the area clean and call Core Dental on 13 13 16 as soon as possible. Our team will arrange an appointment so your dentist can reassess the tooth and replace the filling or plan the next step.

Can a missing temporary filling cause ulcers?

It can. The tooth may be left with sharp edges that rub against the cheek, tongue or lip and can cause a traumatic ulcer. Core Dental dentists can smooth or restore the tooth when they see you.

What may happen if I delay replacing a lost temporary filling?

The tooth can break down further, fracture or develop sharp edges. In more serious cases the tooth may not be restorable and may need extraction, so Core Dental recommends having it reassessed promptly.

Can a temporary filling be replaced?

Yes. Like any filling, a temporary filling can be replaced. Depending on your tooth, a Core Dental dentist may instead advise completing the longer-term treatment, such as a permanent filling or a crown, at the same visit.

When should I call 000 instead of a dentist?

Call 000 for uncontrollable bleeding, difficulty breathing or swallowing, a serious facial injury or other life-threatening symptoms. For toothache or a lost filling without those signs, contact your Core Dental clinic promptly.

Does Core Dental have appointments for urgent dental problems?

Core Dental reserves emergency appointments where possible, and we are open Monday to Friday 8.00am to 6.00pm and Saturday mornings. Call 13 13 16, describe the problem and we will find the earliest suitable time.

How do I book a repair appointment at Core Dental?

Call 13 13 16 or book online at coredental.com.au. We have nine clinics across Melbourne. Tell our team that a temporary filling has fallen out and mention any pain or swelling so we can prioritise your visit.