What to Do If a Temporary Filling Falls Out | Core Dental

Canonical: https://www.coredental.com.au/what-to-do-if-a-temporary-dental-filling-falls-out/

Details:

If a temporary dental filling falls out, do not panic. Contact your dentist as soon as possible and make an appointment so the tooth can be looked at promptly. A temporary filling is designed to be short term, to be replaced later by permanent treatment, so losing it leaves the tooth exposed. At Core Dental our team can see you to check the tooth and plan the next step. This page explains why temporary fillings are used and what can happen if the tooth is left.

What is a temporary dental filling?

A temporary dental filling is a filling intended to be used for a short time. It may be placed as part of an ongoing dental treatment, with the intention of being replaced by permanent treatment later on. Temporary fillings are made from materials chosen to protect the tooth in the short term, and they are not designed to last as long as a permanent restoration.

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

A dentist may place a temporary filling for several reasons.

Sensitivity or toothache: a temporary filling may be placed to ease symptoms in the short term, sometimes using therapeutic materials that help the tooth settle, until a permanent filling can be placed.

Deep or extensive decay: a temporary filling lets the dentist monitor the tooth over time before deciding on longer-term treatment.

Lack of time: if there is not enough time to complete a permanent filling in one appointment, a temporary one can protect the tooth until the next visit.

Ongoing treatment: some procedures, such as root canal treatment and crown placement, need a temporary filling or crown as part of treatment that takes more than one appointment.

Protection while you decide: a temporary filling may protect a tooth while you decide on longer-term treatment.

Anxiety management: for people who feel anxious about dental care, a temporary filling can address a problem such as a broken or sharp tooth and help ease you into treatment. It can reassure you and prepare you for the permanent work.

What should you do if your temporary filling falls out?

Stay calm. The most important step is to contact your dentist as soon as possible and book an appointment so the situation can be addressed promptly. While you wait for your visit, we suggest you:

avoid chewing on the affected side

keep the area clean with gentle brushing

avoid very hot, cold, hard or sticky foods that may irritate the tooth

If you have severe pain or swelling, contact your dental practice promptly and tell the team so they can help you find a suitable time. Call 000 immediately for uncontrollable bleeding, difficulty breathing or swallowing, a serious facial injury or other life-threatening symptoms, and do not wait for a dental appointment in those situations.

What could happen if you do not have the tooth reassessed?

Leaving the tooth without reassessment can cause problems.

Discomfort: sharp edges and rough surfaces can contact your cheek, tongue or lip and may cause an ulcer.

Further breakdown: the exposed tooth structure can be brittle and may deteriorate or fracture, which can mean more extensive treatment such as a larger filling or a crown.

Loss of the tooth: in severe cases the tooth may become unrestorable and need to be extracted. Options such as dental implants or bridges may then need to be considered.

How a tooth responds varies from person to person, so a prompt check helps your dentist decide what is needed.

Can losing a temporary filling lead to a tooth extraction?

In severe cases, yes. If the tooth breaks down too much after a temporary filling falls out and the problem is not addressed, it may become unrestorable and need to be extracted. Replacing the tooth would then involve considering alternatives such as dental implants or bridges. This is why we encourage you to book promptly, because early reassessment can help keep treatment simpler.

How can we help?

Our team can help with lost fillings and ongoing treatment at any of our nine Core Dental clinics. When you call, tell us about your symptoms, when the filling came out and what treatment you were having. Bring relevant medical information and a current medicines list. Your dentist can then assess the teeth, gums and bite, request imaging when clinically appropriate, and explain which options suit you, what they involve and what risks apply. Treatment time, fees, recovery and maintenance vary with the diagnosis and the complexity of care, and a written treatment plan can help you compare stages and payment arrangements before you proceed. Call 13 13 16 or book online. Learn more about fillings and restorations and emergency dentistry .

The published instruction, and what "as soon as possible" is protecting

There is a direct published instruction for a filling that comes out, and the useful part is understanding what the urgency is about — because it is not pain.

The Victorian Department of Health: "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."

What the filling was doing. "Dental fillings are used to repair worn, decayed or damaged teeth. They are made from materials that can 'fill' in parts of a damaged tooth and then be set hard." And a filling is placed after decay has been removed: "Once all decay has been removed, the hole in the tooth is cleaned and dried, and then filled with a filling material."

So what is exposed when a filling comes out is a prepared cavity — a surface that was sealed deliberately, now open to the mouth.

Why that matters, in the Department's own terms. Millions of bacteria "live in your mouth and stick to your teeth in a soft build up called dental plaque", and when they turn sugar into energy they "create acid as a waste product. This acid dissolves the crystals of your teeth and causes mineral loss, weakening the tooth."

And decay progresses: "It is important to have this done as early as possible as 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 centre of the tooth is the thing being protected. "If your tooth has been aching then decay may have reached the centre of the tooth and the nerve inside. When this happens, root canal treatment may be needed to keep the tooth in your mouth."

Which is why the Department's list of causes of pulp damage includes a filling-related entry. Its causes are: "deep-seated and untreated tooth decay"; "decay beneath a deep filling" ; "trauma that damages a tooth"; "habitual tooth grinding (bruxism)"; "long-standing cracks in the teeth"; "advanced gum disease".

So the sequence the instruction is interrupting runs: cavity exposed, decay progresses, pulp affected, root canal treatment needed. Getting it sealed again is what stops that sequence at the first step.

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

What to watch for, and what the sources do not cover

Two things are worth being clear about: the symptoms that would make this more urgent, and the questions no source we hold answers.

Symptoms that suggest the pulp is involved , from the Department's 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".

Facial swelling and pus are different in kind from sensitivity, and belong in the same conversation as the Department's note that an infection can spread "into the surrounding bone which can become severe".

Sensitivity alone is also a recognised decay signal. "As decay gets worse, people often experience sensitivity to sweet, cold or hot food and drinks. If you feel this kind of discomfort, speak to your dentist as soon as possible to have the decay treated."

And it can be silent. "Sometimes, tooth pulp may become damaged or diseased without any symptoms. In these cases, the problem is usually diagnosed by special tests or x-rays during a dental check-up or treatment for other dental concerns." Which is the reason the Department's instruction is not "see someone if it starts hurting".

Now the honest gaps. No source we hold describes a temporary filling material, gives any home repair product, or tells you what to do in the hours before an appointment. We are not going to improvise advice on any of those — a page that invents interim treatment is worse than a page that says it does not know.

What the published advice does offer for the interval. Its general care applies, and two items are directly relevant to an exposed cavity. On cleaning: brush "twice a day", with "a toothbrush with a small head and soft bristles", brushing as the Department directs - "Gently brush teeth and along the gum line in small circles" - and afterwards "spit out the fluoride toothpaste - do not swallow it, and do not rinse

with water". On diet: "The more frequently you eat or drink sugary things, the more often the bacteria produce acid", so the Department's advice to "avoid sugary snacks between meals" is worth following more closely than usual. And where you cannot brush after something sweet, drink "some tap water to wash sugars out of your mouth".

On what will be needed when you get there. It depends on what is found, and the Department does not pretend otherwise: "If there's a problem, your dentist will explain the treatment options and give you an estimate of the cost and the time it will take." An x-ray may be part of that, since "x-rays are often needed to diagnose decay as it can occur in areas not visible to the naked eye".

And on the broader point about replacement. "All fillings need to be replaced eventually. Regular dental check-ups can help ensure fillings that are worn out due to chewing are found and fixed." A filling that has come out is the version of that you notice; the version you do not notice is what check-ups are for.

Sources: Better Health Channel (Victorian Department of Health), 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); Dental treatment, betterhealth.vic.gov.au (reviewed 3 June 2026); Dental fillings, betterhealth.vic.gov.au (reviewed 1 August 2025). All accessed 6 November 2026.

Frequently asked questions

Is it an emergency if my temporary filling falls out?

It is usually not a life-threatening emergency, but you should book promptly. If you have severe pain or swelling, contact your dental practice straight away. For uncontrollable bleeding or trouble breathing or swallowing, call 000.

How long does a temporary filling last?

A temporary filling is meant for the short term, until permanent treatment is placed. How long it lasts depends on the material, the tooth and how you chew, so your dentist will tell you when to return.

Can I put something in the tooth myself?

We suggest you do not try to repair the tooth yourself. Keep the area clean, avoid chewing on it and see your dentist. Some pharmacies stock temporary repair products, so ask your dentist or pharmacist if you cannot be seen straight away.

Will a lost temporary filling hurt?

Some people notice sensitivity to hot, cold or biting, and sharp edges can irritate the tongue or cheek. Others feel little. Either way, the exposed tooth needs to be checked.

Do I need to pay again for a new temporary filling?

Fees depend on the treatment and the clinic. Please ask our team when you book, and we will explain what is involved before treatment starts. We also offer interest-free payment plans, and terms apply.

What does the published advice say to do?

One sentence, and it is unambiguous. The Victorian Department of Health: "If part of your filling breaks off or if your whole filling falls out, see your oral health professional as soon as possible."

Why the urgency if it does not hurt?

Because decay progresses, not because of pain. "It is important to have this done as early as possible as 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."

What is at risk if it is left?

The nerve. "If your tooth has been aching then decay may have reached the centre of the tooth and the nerve inside. When this happens, root canal treatment may be needed to keep the tooth in your mouth." The Department also lists "decay beneath a deep filling" among the causes of damaged or infected pulp.

What symptoms would make it more urgent?

The Department's pulp symptom 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". Swelling and pus belong in the same conversation as its warning that infection can spread "into the surrounding bone which can become severe".

Could there be no symptoms at all?

Yes. "Sometimes, tooth pulp may become damaged or diseased without any symptoms", in which case it is "usually diagnosed by special tests or x-rays during a dental check-up".

Is there a home repair I can use in the meantime?

No source we hold describes one, so we are not going to suggest a product or a technique. The published instruction is to be seen as soon as possible.

What can I do while I wait for the appointment?

The Department's general advice is what applies. Brush gently twice a day with a soft, small-headed brush and fluoride toothpaste, and afterwards "spit out the fluoride toothpaste - do not swallow it, and do not rinse with water". On diet, "the more frequently you eat or drink sugary things, the more often the bacteria produce acid", so its advice to "avoid sugary snacks between meals" matters more than usual. If you cannot brush after something sweet, drink "some tap water to wash sugars out of your mouth".

Will I need an x-ray?

Possibly. "X-rays are often needed to diagnose decay as it can occur in areas not visible to the naked eye."

Will I be told what it will cost before anything is done?

That is what the Department describes: "If there's a problem, your dentist will explain the treatment options and give you an estimate of the cost and the time it will take."

Do fillings coming out mean something was done badly?

Not necessarily. "All fillings need to be replaced eventually. Regular dental check-ups can help ensure fillings that are worn out due to chewing are found and fixed."

Related services and further reading

Fillings and restorations

FAQs about fillings

How do I know if I need a filling?

What happens when you get a dental filling?

Tooth sensitivity after a filling

Difference between a crown and a porcelain filling?

Is it possible to have an allergic reaction to amalgam filling?

Emergency dentistry

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, with Monday to Friday hours to 6.00pm and Saturday mornings.

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

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

This article is general in nature and does not replace advice from a registered dental practitioner who has examined you. Results, recovery times and potential risks vary for each individual. Seek advice from a qualified, AHPRA-registered practitioner before proceeding.

What is a temporary filling used for?

A temporary filling protects a tooth for a short time until permanent treatment can be placed. At Core Dental our dentists may use one for sensitivity, deep decay, multi-visit treatment or when time is limited.

Why does Core Dental sometimes place temporary fillings?

Our dentists may place a temporary filling to ease symptoms, monitor deep decay, protect a tooth during root canal treatment or crown preparation, or help an anxious patient settle into treatment.

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

Stay calm and call Core Dental on 13 13 16 as soon as possible to book a visit. Avoid chewing on that side and keep the area clean until your dentist can check the tooth.

What happens if a lost temporary filling is not replaced?

The tooth can become uncomfortable, with rough edges irritating the cheek or tongue, and brittle tooth structure may break down. Core Dental dentists encourage prompt reassessment to keep treatment as simple as possible.

Can a lost temporary filling lead to extraction?

In severe cases the tooth can become unrestorable and may need to be removed. Core Dental dentists would then discuss options such as dental implants or bridges, which is why we suggest booking promptly.

Can temporary fillings help people who are nervous about the dentist?

Yes. A temporary filling can deal with a broken or sharp tooth quickly and help ease you into care. Core Dental dentists take time to explain each step and work at a pace that suits you.

When is a dental problem an emergency?

Call 000 for uncontrollable bleeding, breathing or swallowing difficulty or a serious facial injury. For severe tooth pain or swelling, call Core Dental promptly on 13 13 16 and we will help find a suitable appointment.

How do I book at Core Dental after losing a filling?

Call 13 13 16 or book online through coredental.com.au at any of our nine Melbourne clinics. Tell our team what happened, and your dentist will examine the tooth and explain your options and costs.