

Your Options for a Cracked Molar

What each option involves, how long each takes, what it typically costs, and the questions to ask

THIS COMPARES OPTIONS IN GENERAL — IT DOES NOT RECOMMEND ONE FOR YOU

Which options are actually available depends on the crack's depth and direction, the health of the nerve, the amount of remaining tooth, your bone, your bite, and your health history. Only your dentist can determine that after examining you.

PATIENT	TOOTH	EXAMINED BY	DATE DISCUSSED
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SIDE-BY-SIDE COMPARISON

OPTION	WHAT IS INVOLVED	VISITS	TIME TO COMPLETE	TYPICAL LONGEVITY	TYPICAL FEE RANGE	MAIN CONSIDERATIONS
A. Monitor	No treatment now. Avoid chewing hard foods on that side. Re-examine and re-image at set intervals.	1 now, then recall	Ongoing	Not applicable	Exam and imaging fees only	Lowest cost today. A crack can extend, and options can narrow if it does.
B. Crown	Reshape the tooth, take an impression or scan, place a temporary crown, then cement the permanent crown.	2	3–4 weeks	10–15 years typical	\$1,100 – \$1,800	Holds the tooth together. Does not treat the nerve. A crowned tooth can still need a root canal later.
C. Root canal then crown	Remove the inflamed or infected nerve tissue, fill and seal the canals, then place a crown.	2–3	4–8 weeks	10–15 years typical	\$2,200 – \$3,400	Used when the nerve is involved. Keeps your natural tooth root and preserves the bone.
D. Extraction then implant	Remove the tooth, allow healing, place an implant in the bone, allow integration, then attach a crown. A bone graft is sometimes needed first.	3–5	4–9 months	Often 15+ years	\$3,800 – \$6,000	Longest timeline and highest cost. Does not involve the neighboring teeth. Requires adequate bone and healing.
E. Extraction then bridge	Remove the tooth, then reshape the two neighboring teeth to support a three-unit bridge.	2–3	4–8 weeks	7–12 years typical	\$3,000 – \$4,500	Faster than an implant, but requires permanently reshaping two healthy neighboring teeth.
F. Extraction, no replacement	Remove the tooth and leave the space.	1	1–2 weeks healing	Not applicable	\$250 – \$650	Lowest cost. Neighboring and opposing teeth may shift over time, which can affect the bite and future options.

Fee ranges are illustrative regional estimates for a demonstration, not a quote. Your actual cost depends on your dental benefits, your annual maximum, any waiting periods, and the specific procedure codes used.

HOW YOUR DENTIST NARROWS THESE DOWN

FACTOR EXAMINED	WHAT IT CHANGES
Depth and direction of the crack	A crack confined to the enamel and dentin may be restorable. A crack extending below the gum line or splitting the root generally cannot be saved.
Whether the nerve is inflamed or infected	Determines whether a root canal is needed before or instead of a crown. Tested with cold, percussion, and sometimes electric pulp testing.
How much sound tooth structure remains	A crown needs enough healthy tooth to grip. Too little, and the tooth may not be restorable.
Bone height and width at the site	Determines whether an implant is possible without grafting.
Your bite and clenching or grinding habits	Heavy forces shorten the life of any restoration and may require a night guard alongside treatment.
Your general health and medicines	Some conditions and medicines affect healing and implant success. Your health history is part of the decision.
Your own priorities	Cost, total time, number of visits, and whether keeping the natural tooth matters to you are legitimate parts of the decision.

QUESTIONS WORTH ASKING

1. Which of these options are actually possible for my tooth, and which are ruled out?
2. What do you recommend, and what is the main reason?
3. What happens if I wait three months? Six months?
4. What is the chance this tooth still needs a root canal after a crown?
5. What is the realistic total cost after my benefits, including the parts my plan will not cover?
6. How many visits, and how much time away from work?
7. What would make us change the plan partway through?
8. What happens if the treatment does not work?

ABOUT YOUR DENTAL BENEFITS

- Most dental plans have an annual maximum, often between \$1,000 and \$2,000. Treatment above that is your responsibility.
- Many plans cover a percentage of a crown or root canal, and a lower percentage — or nothing — for implants.
- Some plans apply a waiting period to major procedures.
- Some plans apply a missing-tooth clause that affects replacement coverage.
- A pre-treatment estimate submitted to your plan gives you a written expectation before you commit. Our treatment coordinator can submit one.
- Splitting treatment across two benefit years is sometimes possible, and sometimes clinically unwise. Ask.

About consent: Reading this document is not consent to any treatment. Informed consent is a conversation with your dentist about your specific diagnosis, the recommended treatment, its benefits, its material risks, the reasonable alternatives, and what may happen without treatment — with time for your questions. A signature on a form does not replace that conversation.

FICTIONAL SPECIMEN. Bright Harbor Dental, the fee ranges, longevity estimates, visit counts, and benefit descriptions are invented for demonstration only. They are not a quote, not a clinical recommendation, not dental advice, and not a statement of what any real plan covers.