

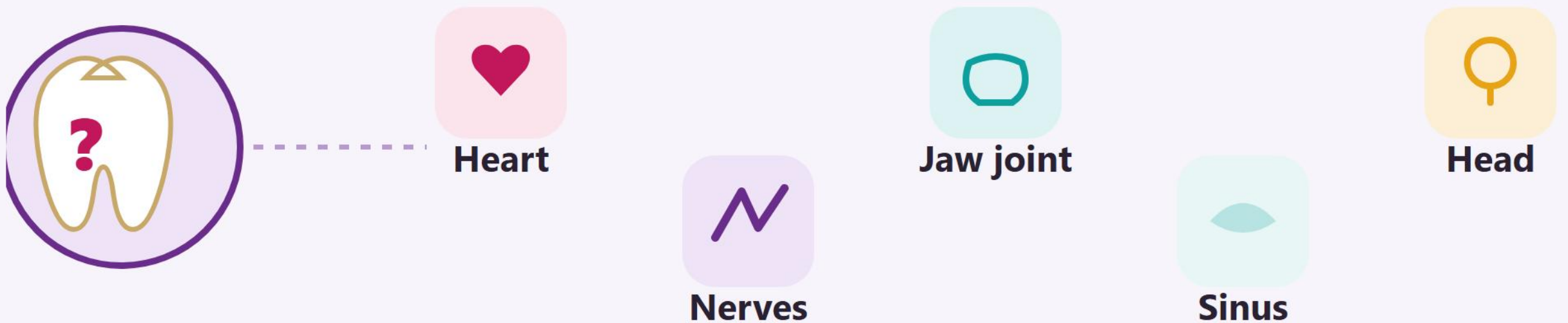


LS Dental
Ipoh · Dr. Kent Teoh

PATIENT GUIDE

Toothache that isn't your **teeth**

When the exam and X-ray are clear but the pain won't stop — the real source may be elsewhere.



The exam is **clear** — so what hurts?

If your dentist finds **no decay, crack, or infection** and the X-ray looks normal, yet the pain continues, the tooth may just be where you **feel** it — not where it **starts**. Nerves from the face, head and even the heart share pathways with your teeth, so the brain can misread the location.



When the heart causes tooth pain

The heart and the lower teeth share nerve pathways, so a struggling heart can send pain to the **lower jaw and teeth** — sometimes with **no chest pain at all**. This can be angina, or a heart attack.

- **Suspect the heart when the ache...**

- Comes on with **effort or stress**
- Sits in the **lower jaw**, often left
- **Eases with rest**, returns with activity
- Has **no dental cause** on exam or X-ray

- **Call emergency if it comes with any of these**

- Chest tightness or pressure
- Shortness of breath
- Dizziness or faintness
- Pain in arm, neck or back
- Cold sweat, nausea
- Sudden unusual tiredness



Don't wait for a dentist — a jaw or tooth ache can be the only warning of a heart attack. In Malaysia, call **999**.

Nerve pain that **mimics a toothache**

The big facial nerve (the **trigeminal**) also serves your teeth. When it is irritated, the pain feels exactly like a bad tooth — but no dental treatment helps.

TRIGEMINAL NEURALGIA



- Sudden **electric-shock stabs**
- Almost always **one side**
- Triggered by touch, chewing, brushing, wind
- Lasts seconds, but repeats

SHINGLES (HERPES ZOSTER)



- **Burning** tooth or face pain
- Pain often comes **days before** the rash
- One side, follows the nerve line
- Blistering rash confirms it

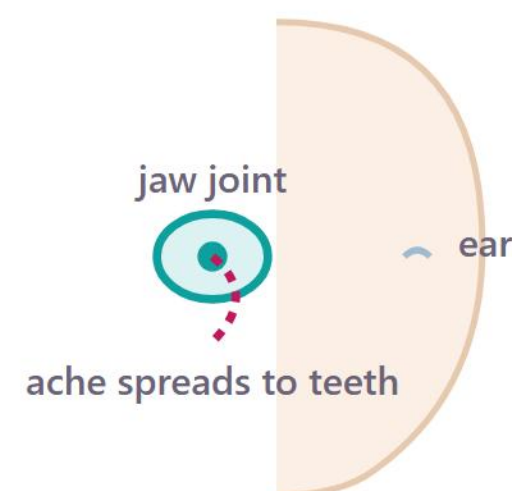
Why it matters: these need medicines for the nerve, not fillings or extractions. Removing a healthy tooth won't stop the pain — a correct diagnosis will.

Your **jaw joint** can ache like a tooth

The jaw joint (TMJ) and its chewing muscles sit right beside your back teeth. When they are strained — often from **clenching or grinding** — the ache spreads into the teeth, and it's easy to blame the wrong thing.

Signs it's the joint

- Dull ache in the jaw **and** back teeth
- **Clicking or popping** when you open
- Worse when **chewing** or opening wide
- Jaw tightness, or it briefly **locks**
- Tender cheek muscles, headaches at the temples



Often helped by: a night guard for grinding, jaw rest and soft food, warm compresses, and stress control — not root canals.

Pain from **nearby** places

Your upper teeth share territory with the sinuses, the ear and throat, and the nerves that drive headaches. Trouble in any of them can be felt as an upper toothache.

MIGRAINE & CLUSTER

A "midface migraine" throbs in the **upper teeth and cheek**, in step with a headache pattern. Cluster headache brings severe one-sided pain around the eye and upper jaw.

SINUS

Blocked maxillary sinuses press on upper back-tooth roots — pressure worse when you **bend forward**. (See our sinusitis guide.)

EAR & THROAT

Ear infections and tonsillitis can refer pain to the **back teeth and jaw**; glossopharyngeal neuralgia stabs when swallowing or yawning.

PHANTOM (NEUROPATHIC)

Atypical odontalgia is a **constant dull ache** with no cause on any test — often lingering after dental work. Nerve pain, not a tooth.

Clue: pain that moves, changes with head position, swallowing or headaches — and doesn't respond to dental treatment — points away from the tooth.

Getting to the **right** answer

A good work-up starts at the dentist — to rule the tooth **in or out** — then points you to the right care. The wrong path is repeated fillings or extractions on a healthy tooth.

- **The sensible order**

- 1. Dental exam + X-ray to check for a real dental cause
- 2. If the tooth is healthy, look wider: jaw joint, nerves, sinus, head
- 3. Referral to the right doctor (ENT, neurologist, physician) as needed



Never delay for the heart: jaw/tooth ache with chest tightness, breathlessness, or arm/neck pain — call **999** now.

Toothache with a normal X-ray? Let's find the real source.

We check the tooth first, then help point you to the right care — no guesswork, no unnecessary treatment.



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