

## A visit to the dentist

Young Eben Frost was in a lot of pain. He had toothache. He could go to the dentist and the dentist would take out the tooth. It would stop hurting then. But Eben was afraid. When your dentist takes out a tooth, he gives you an injection first. Then you cannot feel him pull out the tooth. Without an injection it would hurt. In 1846 when Eben had toothache there were no injections. Having a tooth out hurt a lot. Poor Eben! He paced up and down. His tooth hurt more and more. It was no good! He would have to go to the dentist.

Eben's dentist was Mr Morton. Eben hurried round to see him. Mr Morton had just done an experiment; an experiment on himself!

In those days, dentists learned to work very fast. They did not want the patients to be in pain for long. Mr Morton had learned to be a dentist from another dentist called Horace Wells. He was good at taking out teeth quickly. Mr Morton had been to college too. At college he learned from Charles Jackson who was a chemist. Charles Jackson knew about a chemical called ether. Could it take away pain he wondered?

Mr Morton wanted to try out ether. He tried it on himself. He soaked his handkerchief in ether. He sat down in his own dentist's chair. He held the handkerchief over his mouth. He looked at his watch. He found himself going to sleep. When he woke up he could not move at first. Then slowly he began to move but he could not feel his fingers. He could not feel his legs. But soon all his feeling came back. He looked at his watch. He had been asleep for nearly eight minutes.

Mr Morton was delighted. Nearly eight minutes! A tooth could easily be taken out in that time. The patient would not feel anything. Quickly he told his helpers what he had done. "Now we must try it on someone with toothache," they said.

At that moment, in walked Eben. His face was red with toothache. He was afraid of the pain of having his tooth taken out. Mr Morton explained that he could help. "You will feel nothing," he said.



Eben was pleased. He sat in the dentist's chair. Mr Morton held the handkerchief to Eben's nose. Eben went to sleep. Mr Morton set to work on the tooth at once. In a few minutes he had it out. How pleased Eben was. He had not felt a thing!

Later on Mr Morton, Mr Jackson and Mr Wells all quarrelled over who had thought of the idea first. No one really knows which of them it was. But Eben Frost was very grateful – and so are we all!

Now we no longer need to have ether when we have a tooth out. We can have an injection instead. This is safer and works just as well. But Eben Frost's toothache was the first step.