

A new product promises to make bone healing after tooth extraction simpler. **By Noor Aisha**

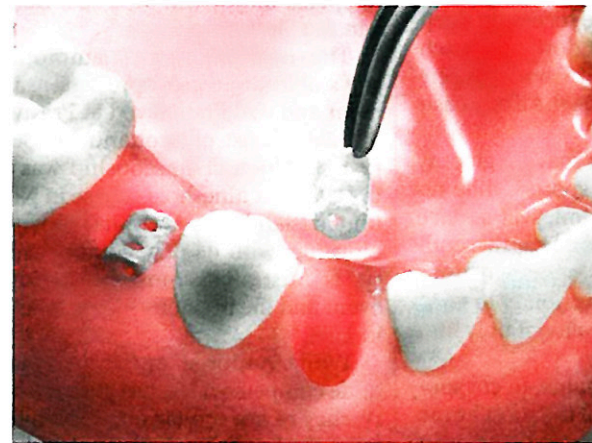
## Preventive measure works best

HAVING your tooth extracted may seem like a relatively benign procedure. But not always – problems can arise if the post-extraction phase is handled without proper care.

Possible complications include premature ageing, as well as difficulty in obtaining dental implants due to the loss of bone height after extraction.

In fact, a patient can lose as much as 50 per cent of the width and height of the bone socket within the first three to six months if nothing is done immediately after the tooth extraction, says Victor Fan, Assistant Professor in the Department of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery at NUS Faculty of Dentistry.

This causes the skin around the mouth



to lose its elasticity due to lack of support, and makes it difficult for patients to get a dental implant.

Some dentists now place bovine scaffolds in the bone socket to promote bone healing. These scaffolds, which originate from cattle bones, do not degenerate and may stay in the jaw a long time – long after

### DRUG FREE

Alvelac, a scaffold of sugar cane origin, is placed in a tooth socket after extraction. Its composition can be altered to allow it to degenerate in two to six months

their purpose has been served.

A new option promises to make things simpler. A recent breakthrough by local firm Bio-Scaffold International (BSI) offers a safer and more vegetarian-friendly alternative.

The product is the Alvelac, a drug-free porous scaffold of sugar cane origin, which is simply placed in a tooth socket after extraction. Its composition can be altered to allow it to degenerate in two to six months.

According to BSI chairman and chief

executive officer Victor Lee, the Alvelac works by allowing the blood clot to form up to an “optimal” level, which in turn allows the bone to heal within four to six months. It also “preserves a lot of space for the bone to heal”.

Clinical trials by the NUS Faculty of Dentistry, which started in June last year, have shown bone height increases with the use of the Alvelac.

“A scaffold works as a preventive measure,” says Mr Lee. The Alvelac was launched in Singapore early this year.

“Our patients are happy because it is non-invasive and has less morbidity,” says Dr Hui Chee Wah from Flozz Dental Surgery, who has tried the Alvelac and approves of it.

BSI is considering expanding the applications of the bio-scaffold for treatment of bone loss from gum diseases, bone augmentation and applications in reconstructive surgery after cancer operations.