



*Compassionate Care. Exceptional Results.*

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## ROOT CANAL THERAPY

The following information has been carefully compiled to assist you in understanding root canal therapy. Please call if you have any concerns during treatment.

### ***Why do I need endodontic treatment?***

Inside the crown and root of your tooth there is a hollow chamber (root canal), which contains blood vessels and nerves (pulp). If the pulp becomes injured or diseased, it may become infected. The germs causing the infection may spread throughout the entire pulp and eventually reach the jawbone causing an abscess. Once the pulp has become infected or irreversibly inflamed, it is necessary to remove the pulp and to clean, sterilize, and fill the root canals.

### ***How does the Pulp become infected?***

There are several possible ways:

1. Bacteria from a deep cavity may infect the pulp.
2. Nerves and blood vessels may be damaged from a sudden blow to your mouth.
3. A tooth can be fractured or broken, exposing normally protected pulp to harmful bacteria in your mouth.
4. Severe periodontal (gum) disease may affect the pulp, requiring endodontic as well as periodontal therapy.

### ***What are the symptoms of a diseased pulp?***

Often a diseased pulp is painful. Or your tooth may become very sensitive to hot or cold foods and beverages.

### ***Can a pulp be diseased if it does not hurt?***

Yes, pain and disease do not always go hand in hand. Deterioration of the pulp can be so gradual that it can be nearly painless.

### ***Can an x-ray indicate a need for root canal therapy?***

Yes, sometimes the x-ray film will show a dark area at the end of the root, indicating the infection has caused some bone loss, which normally will start to reform once the root canal treatment, is complete. However, an x-ray may appear normal and still a tooth may require root canal treatment, which is why we perform other tests.

### ***How successful is endodontic therapy?***

Research shows that 90 to 95 cases out of 100 are successful.

### ***What does endodontic treatment involve?***

1. Treatment is performed under local anesthetic. A small opening is made on the top or backside of your tooth depending on which tooth is treated.
2. After the opening has been made, the inside of the tooth is carefully cleaned. 3. Next, it is medicated and temporarily sealed.
3. In some cases, where severe infection is draining through the opening in the tooth, the



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dentist may leave the tooth open a few days to drain. You may also be given an antibiotic.

4. Sometimes, it is necessary to remove infected tissue from the ends of the root in addition to treating the tooth through the crown. This is called periapical surgery and has saved many teeth that cannot be treated by regular root canal therapy alone.
5. When the dentist is satisfied that the root is free from infection he will fill and seal the canal and pulp chamber with a material which will prevent bacteria from reentering the tooth.

***How long will treatment take?***

Treatment generally takes from 1-2 appointments.

***Will my tooth discolor?***

There may be a tendency for the tooth to darken. If this happens it can be bleached. Bleaching is a relatively simple process done from inside the tooth. If the tooth darkens again, your dentist may put a crown on it.

***If the pulp is removed will my tooth be dead?***

Your tooth will no longer be sensitive to hot and cold or to having the dentist drill on it. However, the tooth still receives nourishment from blood vessels outside the tooth. A tooth may be tender during treatment and after for days or weeks because there are nerves outside the tooth in the periodontal ligament. These nerves often register pain as long as the infection is still present. This is why we have you come back one week and three months after treatment to monitor the healing.

***Will the tooth last?***

Your tooth can last you a lifetime as long as you get it properly restored and take care of your teeth and gums by flossing and brushing.

***Wouldn't it be cheaper and easier to remove the tooth?***

No. The cost of endodontic treatment and a filling is usually less than the cost of removing the tooth and replacing with a bridge or partial denture.

Your dentist is concerned of your long-range view of your oral health. It is important you keep all your teeth all your life for clear speech, good nutrition and good appearance.

**IMPORTANT**

1. If you have discomfort, which Tylenol or Aspirin does not alleviate, please call and you will be prescribed some pain medication.
2. It is possible to swell at any stage of treatment. If this occurs apply cold outside. You may need an antibiotic at this time.
3. It is the patient's responsibility to have a permanent restoration placed after treatment is completed. We recommend placement of an orthodontic band or temporary crown until the tooth is comfortable to chew on and then a permanent crown should be placed. Some teeth, if not extensively restored or decayed already, may not require a crown.