

Root Canal

Chances are you or a family member, have been told that a root canal is necessary to save a tooth; perhaps root canal therapy is already underway. In either case, it's important to understand what will happen during root canal treatment and why this procedure is necessary to save the tooth.

Why Root Canal Treatment?

If you have been told that a root canal is necessary to save one of your teeth, it is important that you understand why this procedure is necessary and what happens during root canal treatment. Root canal treatment (endodontics) treats disorders of the nerve (also called the pulp) of the tooth. It is used to be that a tooth with a diseased or infected nerve had to be removed. In 95 percent of the cases today, however, this is no longer true. We believe in saving teeth (instead of removing them). We make every effort to help you keep your natural teeth for a lifetime!

What Makes a Root Canal Necessary?

The following are the most common factors contributing to need for root canal treatment:

- Physical irritation caused by deep decay or a very large filling
- Severe gum disease
- Trauma, such as a physical blow to a tooth or a constant striking of a tooth in the opposite jaw that traumatizes the tooth

Regardless of the initial cause, the tooth pulp becomes irritated and infected. Bacteria grow within the tooth pulp, causing pressure and pain, sometimes accompanied by swelling of the face. Sometimes the deterioration of the pulp happens so gradually the bacteria can destroy the pulp. As this happens, the bone surrounding the tooth may become infected and abscessed, which may lead to the destruction of the bone surrounding the tooth.

What Happens During Treatment?

If we determine through x-rays and a clinical examination that root canal treatment is necessary, we will schedule a series of appointments for you. It is important that you keep these appointments to prevent delays in treatment and healing, which can affect the outcome. It's also essential that you take all antibiotics and medications prescribed to hasten healing and reduce swelling.

1. First, we want to relieve any discomfort you might be experiencing and ensure your comfort throughout the treatment. When necessary, an anesthetic is used to numb the tooth and surrounding area. The tooth may be isolated with a rubber dam, which confines the treatment area and protects the mouth from bacteria and chemical agents. An opening is made through the crown of the tooth into the pulp.
2. We carefully remove the diseased pulp. The root canal area inside your tooth is cleaned, enlarged and shaped. Then, depending on your individual case, the root canal and pulp chamber may be permanently filled and sealed. In some cases, we

- place a temporary medication in the tooth to control bacterial growth and reduce infection.
3. A temporary filling is placed in the opening of the tooth until the next visit. In some cases, the tooth may be left open in order to allow the infection to drain. We will decide what is right for your case and do whatever is necessary to assure your comfort.
 4. At the next appointment, we sterilize the inside of the tooth to remove the bacteria. Throughout the root canal procedure, we take x-rays to ensure that all of the infected pulp is removed and that the walls inside the canal are smooth.
 5. To complete the process, the root canal and pulp chamber are permanently filled and sealed.
 6. Finally, the tooth is fully restored to chewing function.

We believe in saving teeth and we will make every effort to save yours!

What care follows the treatment?

Once the root canal treatment has been completed, you should consider the following:

1. Brittleness—a non-vital (endodontically treated) tooth is more brittle than a vital one and is more susceptible to fracture. Therefore, in most cases, we recommend that your root canal tooth be crowned (capped) following treatment.
2. Discoloration—you may notice that your endodontically treated tooth (especially a front tooth) has undergone a change in color. Though this discoloration is of no medical concern, you may be interested in having the tooth whitening if we do not decide to place a crown on the tooth.

A FINAL WORD

Throughout your root canal treatment, you may have questions or concerns not covered here. We will make every effort to ensure your comfort during root canal treatment. And we're happy to answer any question you may have. Our goal is to help you preserve your natural teeth for a lifetime, so you can smile with confidence!