



root canal
treatment



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What is it?

All teeth are held in the jaws by roots, front teeth (incisors and canines) normally have one root and back teeth (molars) have more. In the middle of the tooth the pulp has blood and nerve tissue, which runs through canals in each root.

When teeth are injured or there is lots of decay this pulp can die and become infected leading to an abscess and toothache.

Root Canal Treatment (RCT, also known as root filling or endodontics) means removing the damaged or dead pulp and filling the space left.

How is it done?

1. First an x-ray will be taken of your tooth to see extent of decay, the shape of the roots and canals and to assess the infection in the surrounding bone. Some roots are more difficult to fill if they are very curved or if the canals are too narrow.
2. You will be given local anaesthetic to make the tooth and surrounding area numb. However some hypersensitive or infected teeth may be more difficult to make numb and treatment may have to be delayed.
3. An opening will be made through the top of the tooth (if back tooth) or at the back of the tooth (if front tooth) to gain access to the pulp. The pulp is then removed using narrow instruments to get right the way down to the tip of the root.
4. The pulp is washed out and canals disinfected using diluted bleach and other medicaments.
5. Measurements are taken mid-treatment to make sure all canals are cleaned to the tip.

6. Finally the canals are shaped so we can fill them properly to seal the root to the tip. Then the top of the tooth is also filled.

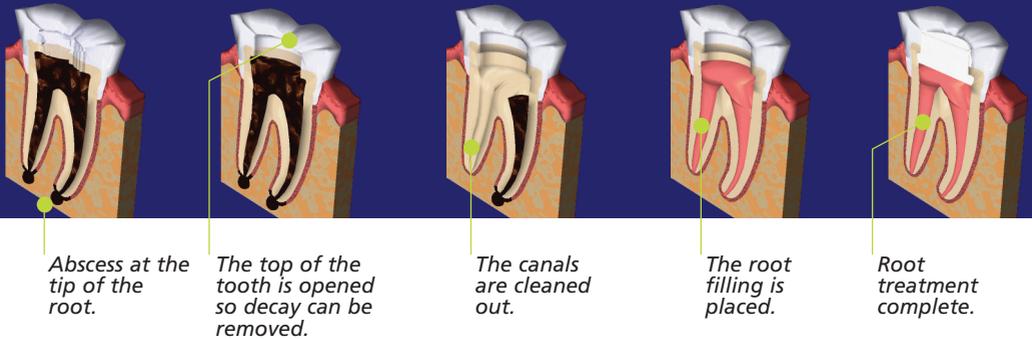
After root canal treatment

Please note success of a root canal treatment is not guaranteed. Root canal systems in teeth are very complex and despite best efforts it is not always possible to remove all the nerve tissue and bacteria and thus they can get re-infected.

After root canal treatment teeth can discolour and are known to be more brittle therefore further treatment such as whitening or crowns may be required.

What happens if root canal treatment is not carried out?

If root canal treatment is not carried out infection can spread beyond the tooth and can be serious. Also without a root filling the infected pulp will deteriorate and the tooth eventually will have to be taken out.



Informed Consent for Root Canal Treatment

- 1. Success Rate.** Root Canal Treatment (RCT) is about 95% successful. Many factors affect the success of the treatment: your general health, condition of the nerve and the root canal(s), bone support around the tooth, strength of the tooth (fracture lines), etc. Even though root canal treatment has a very high success rate, there is no guarantee or warranty of a perfect result.
- 2. Completion of Treatment.** RCT are sometimes completed in a single appointment or may take several appointments, if the treatment spans several appointments, you will have a temporary filling placed on the tooth to protect the canal. If the filling should come out, please call the practice so we can replace it. Once treatment begins, it is absolutely necessary that the treatment be completed very soon after, and the patient must diligently follow all instructions.
- 3. Sensitivity.** Just like with fillings, a root canal tooth may be sensitive both during and after final treatment. Usually this sensitivity disappears in several weeks. If it does not or appears to worsen, please call the practice to let us know.
- 4. Crown Needed.** One of the main reasons for RCT failure is because of breakage or fracture of the tooth. A fractured tooth (especially a vertical fracture) may require extraction. A crown is usually recommended for any tooth that has been root canal treated. This is because these teeth no longer have a blood supply to them and become more brittle than your other teeth. This is especially true of your back "chewing" teeth—the molars and premolars. A crown goes over the root canal treated tooth to strengthen it and protect it from breakage. Your dentist will advise you of the cost for the different crown options.
- 5. Proper Care.** Root canal treated teeth have no nerve, but they can still decay. It is important to take care of

these teeth just as you would any other tooth: good home care, proper diet, and regular dental checkups.

- 6. Potential complications.** There are some potential risks factors involved in the procedure. The canals of the tooth can be very narrow or curved or blocked. This can sometimes mean we are unable to completely fill the root canals, or instruments used during the treatment can separate inside the root canals. Canals can also branch out forming lateral canals that are very difficult to clean and can harbour infection. There may be infection around the roots of the tooth. The tooth may remain or become sensitive. Occasionally, RCT alone does not complete the treatment, and a surgical procedure (called apicectomy) or possibly extraction may be necessary to try to resolve the problem.

There is a chance whilst performing this procedure the instruments can perforate the tooth or there can be damage to existing fillings/crowns/porcelain veneers or even fracture of the tooth/root. Unforeseen conditions may arise that require a procedure that is different than set above or a referral to a specialist.

By signing this document you give the consent to the dentist to perform such procedures when, in their professional judgment, the procedures are necessary.

The nature and purpose of RCT has been explained to you, and you have had an opportunity to have your questions answered. You understand that dentistry is not an exact science and success with RCT cannot be guaranteed and as such no refund is available if the treatment were to fail. In view of the above information, you authorise the Dentist to undergo RCT as necessary.

Patient Signature: _____ Date: _____

Dentist Signature: _____ Date: _____



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