

Endodontic Therapy (Root canal)

Root canal treatment is performed so we might keep a tooth (or teeth), which would otherwise require an extraction. Since it is an exacting and time consuming procedure, root canal therapy is not inexpensive, however, it is usually much less expensive than the alternative of tooth extraction and the placement of a bridge or implant.

Although this procedure has a high degree of success, **it cannot be guaranteed.** Occasionally a tooth that has had root canal therapy may require surgery or extraction due to fractures beyond your dentist's control.

Root canal therapy involves removal and thorough cleaning of the pulp tissue (nerves) from the inside portion of the tooth and roots. After cleaning and controlling any infection, the roots are filled with a rubbery material to seal the canals. The root canal therapy usually takes one appointment, but occasionally may require two to three appointments. This depends upon the root anatomy (ie: calcified and curved canals), which makes endodontic treatment much more difficult.

If your roots are calcified or curved, there is a risk that a dental instrument may be broken inside the tooth. This may or may not affect the prognosis depending on its location. The treatment is performed using local anesthetic and is generally painless. The tooth may be tender for a few hours to days following treatment. This can usually be controlled with over-the-counter pain relievers, such as Advil, Tylenol, or Aspirin. Occasionally a "flare-up" may occur after treatment, requiring a prescription pain reliever and/or antibiotic.

What to Expect Following Root Canal Therapy

A temporary filling is placed in your tooth after the roots have been filled. Usually the filling is quite soft. Do not bite on this tooth for at least three hours after your appointment. Often, bits of temporary filling break away and the filling will feel "dished out" in the root treated tooth. This is normal. **YOU MUST HAVE A PERMANENT FILLING PLACED WITHIN THREE WEEKS AFTER COMPLETION OF YOUR ROOT FILLING.** If the tooth is not permanently filled, it will have a much greater chance of fracture or failure, requiring re-treatment, surgery, or extraction. Most teeth that have had a root filling require crowns, as these teeth become more brittle and susceptible to fracture. Root treated teeth must be re-evaluated over the next 6-12 months. X-rays will be taken of the root treated tooth so that we may review the healing process following your treatment. It is important that these endodontically treated teeth be examined, as a small percentage of these teeth do not heal completely, and may require further endodontic procedures. As previously mentioned, your tooth may be sore for a few days after treatment. Usually Advil, Tylenol or Aspirin will alleviate your symptoms. Try not to exert undue pressure on the tooth until you have had a permanent filling placed. If the pain is more than Advil or its equivalent will handle, please call our office for an evaluation. The discomfort should diminish over the next few days and the tooth should feel normal within one to two weeks. Occasionally, the gums and cheek adjacent to your tooth will swell and be quite uncomfortable. This is a "flare-up". If you have these symptoms, please call our office for an emergency visit. It may be necessary to prescribe an antibiotic/analgesic or drain the infection. If in the event this treatment fails, the other options will be either surgery re-treatment by a specialist or extraction of the tooth

If you have any concerns, please call our office immediately at 262-2627 and we will be happy to address these concerns.

