

Root Canal Treatment: Frequently Asked Questions

Q: *Why am I having this treatment?*

A: To remove dead or dying nerve tissue from the canals in the root of your tooth.

It is important to clean and fill the canals to prevent and/ or eliminate infection that will lead to the formation of an abscess.

Q: *Why am I having further treatment if my tooth has already been root filled?*

A: If bacteria have been allowed to re-enter the root canals, more treatment is needed to re-clean and fill the canals again.

Bacteria may re-enter the tooth via:

- A broken crown or filling
- Decay
- The bloodstream, if the root canals were not completely cleaned and filled during the original treatment.

Recent research has shown that certain teeth have extra, hidden canals that can still harbour infection. By using a powerful microscope, these canals can now be found and treated.

Q: *Does this treatment hurt?*

A: Your tooth will be numb for the treatment.

Often the nerve has already died, but the bone and gum surrounding the tooth are still alive, so we numb the area being treated for this reason.

Q: *Does the tooth need to be crowned ("capped") after the root canal treatment?*

A: Usually, yes. This is because the tooth is weakened by having the central core of it removed to access the root canals. By covering the tooth with a crown, you can continue to use your tooth as normal.

Q: *How long does the treatment take?*

A: Usually, more than one visit is needed to complete the treatment. With a complicated molar tooth, up to 3 visits may be required.

Q: *Why is it better than extracting the tooth?*

A: Once a tooth has been root filled, it can continue to function as a normal, healthy tooth.

Removal of a tooth affects how your bite works. It can mean that other teeth are subjected to bigger forces, causing deterioration of the teeth, and problems with the bone and gum supporting the teeth. The loss of multiple teeth can affect the health of your jaw joints.

Root Canal Treatment: Post-Operative Instructions

- You can expect the tooth to feel “bruised” for 1-2 weeks. If the discomfort is affecting your daily activities, you may choose to take painkillers.
- The tooth has a temporary filling in the biting surface. This filling is fairly substantial, but try to avoid eating very hard or very chewy foods on it.
- It is important that you telephone the practice as soon as possible if:
 - Any part of the tooth breaks, even if it doesn't hurt
 - The temporary filling breaks
 - You notice any swelling in your gum or face
 - You experience very bad pain that can't be controlled by painkillers

(If this occurs outside surgery hours, we do operate an emergency service and the details of this are on our answerphone. However, we would appreciate it if emergency calls are limited to incidences of severe pain or swelling. This is, in part, because we have no nursing assistance outside surgery hours so can only offer basic emergency care.)