

ROOT CANAL TREATMENT

WHAT IS ENDODONTIC (ROOT CANAL) TREATMENT?

It used to be that if a tooth was infected or the nerve in the tooth was dying, the tooth would have to be extracted. In modern times because of a procedure known as root canal treatment the infection can be treated, the injured nerve removed and the pain associated with such symptoms alleviated.

The most common reason for root canal treatment is an infected, inflamed or abscessed tooth, which may result from a deep cavity, periodontal disease or even a fractured tooth. In certain instances even trauma - like a sharp blow to the mouth can result in damage to the pulp(nerve chamber) of the tooth. Should you have symptoms such as swelling, sensitivity to hot and cold or discomfort on touching your tooth, a dentist should be consulted immediately.

Root Canal treatment removes the pulp tissue, which is composed of a nerve and blood supply within the tooth. After all the material has been removed from within the root, the canal or canals if it is a multi-rooted tooth, are sterilized and sealed with a material that prevents bacteria from re-entering an re-infecting the tooth.

Because a root canal removes everything, which feeds the tooth and keeps it alive the tooth will become very brittle after a period of time. This time period varies from person to person. It is for that reason that the tooth should be restored as quickly as possible and your dentist might recommend that a post and a crown be placed as a final restoration. Back teeth are usually crowned or capped shortly after a root canal has been performed to prevent the tooth from shattering due to the pressure put on it by chewing.

Root canal work is not uncomfortable, and in some instances can be performed in one visit. The discomfort associated with root canal is due to the infection associated with the need for the root canal. If there is recurring pain after the root canal has been started, or after it is completed be sure to notify your dentist as soon as possible.

IS ROOT CANAL THERAPY FOR EVERYONE?

Yes! Everyone who wants to save her or his teeth (having been diagnosed as having a problem needing root canal therapy) can benefit and expect to maintain the tooth in its healthiest state, once the root canal is completed. There is no limitation for age or state of

health. Endodontic (root canal) therapy is an elective procedure for those people who want to invest their time and money in keeping their teeth.

An abscess that has formed around the apex of a lower central incisor can be favourably treated by retreating the tooth and/or an endodontic surgical procedure - a decision that should be made by your dentist.

The single limitation for root canal therapy for any given tooth is the restorability of the tooth. Simply, restorability means confirming there is enough tooth structure to save and ultimately restore the tooth to function. Once treated through root canal therapy and appropriately restored, a tooth (with a previous abscess or infected dental pulp) can function normally for a very long time. Your general dentist can best determine the final permanent restoration for the root canal treated tooth. If a root canal ever does fail, consider that there are still treatment options with very good success rates that can save your tooth, root canal re-treatment and endodontic surgery.

A tooth that has had a root canal can develop an abscess and/or infection. It can be due to the breakdown of the root canal material at the apex of the tooth. By retreating a tooth that has had a root canal a better seal can potentially be placed. Once the seal is reestablished, the abscess or infection may degenerate.

Clearly root canals are not for everyone and everyone who has been told they need a root canal has the option of having the tooth extracted. If you have not in the past, or do not intend in the future, to make a concerted effort to be a dental wise patient, serious about routine dental care, are not committed to having the tooth properly restored after the root canal, and you do not mind the thought of losing a (or another tooth), then endodontic therapy may not be the treatment of choice for you.

WHAT ROOT CANAL FILLING MATERIAL IS USED?

The most common root canal filling material being used by dentists now days is a rubber compound called gutta percha. Gutta percha comes in preformed cones which are sized to match the files which have been used to clean out the inside of the tooth.

A root canal sealer (a paste) is usually used in conjunction with gutta percha cones. It is either applied to the cone's surface before the cone is placed into the tooth's root canal, or else applied inside the root canal itself before the gutta percha cone is positioned. We utilize System B mechanics to melt the Gutta percha master point, which is followed by the Obtura system to create vertical as well as horizontal seals within the root canal

system. This enables us to reduce the chances of re-infection.

The gutta percha cones are warmed and therefore softened. This allows the gutta percha to more closely adapt to the precise shape of the interior of the tooth.

The Obtura system places the gutta percha via the use of a gutta percha "gun". This apparatus is somewhat similar to a hot glue gun. It pre-warms a tube of gutta percha so the material is very soft. The gutta percha is then squeezed out into the tooth.

After your dentist has finished the filling and sealing aspect of the root canal process they will place a filling in the access hole they created at the beginning of your treatment. The individual steps of performing the root canal treatment have now been completed. It is very important that a final restoration is placed on the tooth as soon as possible in order to preserve the integrity of the seal and to prevent the possibility of re-infection.

WILL THERE BE ANY PAIN OR DISCOMFORT AFTER THE ROOT CANAL TREATMENT?

The hope is that after your root canal treatment you will notice very little discomfort from your tooth. It is not uncommon however that for the first day or so after its work a tooth may feel a little tender. Whenever you have a question, in all cases, you should feel free to contact your dentist's office just to ensure that what you are experiencing seems to them to be within normal limits.

A tooth's sensitivity can usually be minimized by the use of over-the-counter analgesics, especially those, which also possess anti-inflammatory properties. Ibuprofen (Brufen) can be an effective choice for this type of discomfort, of course you should always read the label, indications, and warnings of any product you anticipate using so to make sure it is appropriate for you.

HOW SAFE IS IT TO CHEW ON A TOOTH WHICH HAS JUST HAD ROOT CANAL TREATMENT?

Don't look for trouble. It is usually best to exercise caution with a tooth which is undergoing root canal treatment or has just had its treatment completed. Until your dentist tells you otherwise you should minimize chewing on the tooth. Here are some reasons why:

In those cases where more than one root canal treatment appointment is needed the temporary filling which has been placed in your tooth might come out. If it does, saliva

and debris will re-contaminate the interior of the tooth. Your dentist will have to spend your next root canal appointment cleaning your tooth out again.

Sometimes, since the tooth receiving the root canal treatment feels so much better, a person is eager to make use of their tooth again. Until your dentist has had a chance to finish rebuilding your tooth it should be considered to be fragile. What a disappointment it would be to spend the time, effort, and money to have root canal treatment performed, only to have the tooth irreparably break or crack before it was fully restored