

ROOT CANAL TREATMENT

Teeth are held in the jaw by their roots. Front teeth normally have one root, but teeth further back have more. In the middle of each tooth is a soft mass of tissue called the PULP. In a healthy tooth the pulp contains nerves and blood supply, extending into the roots through the root canal. Decay or injury can destroy the living pulp. Bacteria can migrate down to the pulp, it eventually becomes infected, and the tooth's blood supply dies, leading to an abscess and toothache.

Sometimes the tooth becomes very painful before you get an abscess; this is because the nerve is irritated/damaged by bacteria, decay, deep fillings, inflammation, a crack in the tooth or gum disease. A build up of blood creates pressure in the middle of the tooth and, as it has nowhere to escape to, the tooth becomes very tender.

Root canal treatment (also known as root filling or endodontics) means removing the damaged or dead pulp and filling the space left. The remaining tooth should then be restored with either a crown, overlay or filling. Research has shown that this final restoration is extremely important to stop further bacterial infection getting in through the top of the tooth. Your dentist/specialist will discuss the most suitable restoration of the tooth with you at the treatment planning stage.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF ROOT TREATMENT?

YOU KEEP YOUR TOOTH! Replacing an extracted tooth can be very expensive and so having this treatment can save you money in the long term.

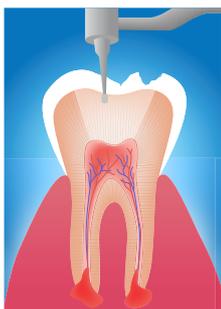
Pulp damage can cause toothache, but the pain will usually end very quickly when the root canal is cleaned out. Without a root filling, a tooth will have to be taken out in the end. There is also a possibility of infection spreading beyond the tooth itself.

WHAT ARE THE CHANCES OF ROOT TREATMENTS WORKING?

In private practice root fillings are successful over 85% of the time depending on the severity of the infection. It is important to take time with this treatment. Think of it as cleaning a sink in the kitchen, if you spend 20 seconds cleaning it with cheap bleach the sink will not remain clean for long at all. Spending a lot more time on cleaning with the best bleach and cloths then the sink will remain clean for a lot longer. In the unlikely event that the root filling is unsuccessful, then we will either re-treat the tooth or extract it.



DECAY IN TOOTH



ACCESS TO THE NERVE



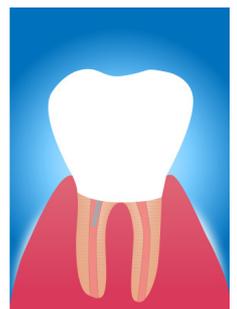
CLEANING FILE



PLACEMENT OF ROOT FILLING



CORE & POST



CROWN TO PROTECT TOOTH AND SEAL ROOT CANAL

Root canal treatment means removing the damaged or dead pulp and filling the space left.

WHAT WILL MY DENTIST DO?

An x-ray can show the number and shape of the root canals, and signs of infection in the surrounding bone. Teeth can have several roots and some roots are easier to fill than others, because of their shape i.e. some are curved, oval shaped, long, thin etc. Some teeth can have up to five canals.

Whilst carrying out a root treatment it is very important to keep the tooth dry and isolated. Isolation of the tooth from saliva is very important as saliva contains millions of bacteria which research has shown can re-infect the tooth. Your dentist will use where possible a thin sheet of rubber to isolate your tooth. This is called a "Rubber Dam".

You will be given a local anesthetic, and then an opening is made through the top of the tooth down into the pulp. The dentist then uses narrow files to remove the dead pulp from the middle of the tooth and shapes the root canals and cleans these areas out with various liquids and materials. The dentist will take another x-ray to determine the length of each canal, then place a temporary filling and possibly give you a course of antibiotics. The above will all be carried out at your first appointment. If the tooth is heavily infected or has been infected for a long time it can take a while for the symptoms to subside.

During the next stage, the dentist fills the root canal(s). This is necessary to stop bacteria re-infecting the empty spaces inside the tooth. The tooth will then be restored back to its original shape. This can be done with a filling initially, but it is normally necessary for a crown to be placed on top of the tooth when the RCT is successful. When the tooth has been root filled it becomes brittle

and more liable to fracture so this is one of the main reasons, we crown the tooth. We do not want the tooth to fracture after so much time and effort has been invested to save the tooth. Another important reason to crown the tooth is to provide an excellent seal for the root filling, as a filling is more likely to leak bacteria than a crown. If bacteria get back into the root canal, another abscess is possible, and the root treatment will need to be carried out once again.

Root filled teeth can become darker than other teeth, but internal bleaching can be used to make them lighter again.

