



## Root Canal Treatment

### Why and when do I need root canal treatment?

Root canal treatment is undertaken to treat or prevent an infection occurring inside the tooth. Treatment may be required after extensive decay in a tooth, a deep, fractured or leaky filling or crown, repeated replacement fillings, extensive gum disease and its treatment, tooth injuries or a tooth that has developed a crack.

Occasionally a healthy tooth may need a root canal treatment to enable a crown to be retained (referred to as 'elective root canal treatment').

### Is root canal treatment always feasible?

Success of the treatment may be influenced by the quality of the new filling or crown. If there is not enough tooth structure left, extraction of the tooth may be necessary.

### What is involved in root canal treatment?

The treatment is carried out under local anaesthetic to ensure comfort. Where a decision has been made to proceed with root canal treatment, the procedure will involve:

1. Placement of 'Rubber dam' (an isolation technique) that enables the tooth to be kept dry and prevents it from becoming infected from your saliva.
2. Placement of a metal band around the tooth to protect it, if there is no pre-existing crown. The area around a tooth therefore requires additional care in home cleaning.
3. Entry to the centre of the tooth (root canals) by drilling through the tooth, filling or crown. If the filling or crown is defective it may need to be removed and replaced with a temporary material.
4. Using specialised instruments to prepare the root canals for washing.
5. Taking x-ray pictures to check the length of the root canals and quality of root filling.
6. Use of disinfectants to wash the root canals.
7. Dressing of a tooth temporarily between appointments.
8. Placement of a root filling material to prevent the root canals from becoming re-infected.



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### **Will I experience pain during treatment?**

Pain during treatment is a rare possibility, particularly when the nerve is inflamed. Under these circumstances, local anaesthesia may not be so affective. Some forbearance is required though to achieve immediate progress in treatment. Mild discomfort after treatment may be caused by one of a combination of factors; local anaesthesia, rubber sheet placement or the treatment procedures and may last up to a few days following treatment. This is easily treated by mild pain killers, if necessary. Occasionally problems may be more intense, in which case advice can be sought by telephoning the practice on 02 6282 7711.

### **How long does the treatment usually take?**

The process of finding, placing instruments into, preparing and washing roots canals is a highly skilled procedure and takes time and patience during multiple and longer than normal appointments.

### **What are the risks associated with root canal treatment?**

The number of risks are minimized by the high standard of care.

However, sometimes unforeseen problems can occur and may include the following:

1. Pain during treatment
2. Mild discomfort after treatment
3. Leakage of antiseptic agents into the mouth
4. Tooth fracture
5. Failure of canal location and negotiation
6. Blockage of root canals
7. Separation of files in the canal
8. Root perforation
9. Extrusion of antiseptic into the mouth or through the end of the root into the surrounding soft tissues.



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### **How successful is the treatment?**

Failure despite adequate treatment is a possibility in a small proportion of cases and is usually due to persistent infections. The success rate in those cases where there is no inflammation around the end of the root is of the order of 96%.

The success rate for those teeth with inflammation around the end of the root is about 85%. In case of failure, either re-treatment, surgery or tooth extraction may be considered.

### **What happens after my root canal treatment?**

Following completion of the root canal treatment, the tooth will be filled with a temporary dressing material. You will then need an additional restoration such as a crown to protect the tooth from fracturing.

The tooth is periodically monitored to make sure that the bone cavity around the root end is healing. This requires an X-ray picture. The healing can take from six months to four years and sometimes longer. The first check up is usually at 6 months.

Warmest Regards,  
Dr. Sarita Atreya