



Root Canal Treatment information

1. What is Root canal treatment?

Root canal treatment is the removal of infected or inflamed pulp from the inside of the tooth. The pulp is removed from the crown and the roots of the tooth. Pulp is the soft tissue inside of teeth, it consists of nerves and blood vessels. Once an infected or inflamed pulp is removed, the tooth can function as normal and can usually be retained indefinitely.

2. What happens during a root canal treatment?

Your dentist will take an x-ray of the tooth and the area around it. The tooth will then be numbed with local anaesthesia (an injection). All tooth decay will be removed. The dentist will gain access to the pulp chamber of the tooth and remove the infected/inflamed pulp from the crown and roots of the tooth. The root canals are cleaned thoroughly and completely sealed with a filling material to prevent further infection. Root canal treatment may take a couple of appointments to complete. Following the root canal treatment, the tooth will be restored with a strong filling material or a crown, to give the tooth the best chance and prevent any further damage.

3. What are the risks and complications of a root canal treatment?

In most cases, root canal treatment is successful and the tooth will no longer cause pain. However, there is always some risk depending on the condition of the tooth, the complexity of the root canals and your response to treatment. If this treatment fails, the tooth may require further treatment or extraction if the tooth is not salvageable.

- **Pain:** mild, temporary pain may occur following root canal treatment due to inflammation to the surrounding tissues of the tooth in question, however severe and/or persisting pain may require more treatment to the tooth.
- **Infection:** in most cases, treatment will completely resolve infection around the tooth. However, there is a small risk of an infection reoccurring. If an infection reoccurs further treatment will be required to the tooth.
- **Discolouration:** teeth may become darker following root canal treatment. There are procedures available which may help brighten the appearance of the tooth if this occurs.
- **File fracture:** the fine metal files used to clean the root canals may break during use. Further information may be required, and your dentist will discuss this with you.
- **Tooth fracture:** root canal treatment may reduce the strength and durability of a tooth, making it more likely to fracture. Some fractures may result in the tooth needing to be extracted. This risk is reduced by placing a strong filling or a crown.

- **Perforation:** depending on the size and shape of the roots, there is a risk of creating a hole in the side of the root of the tooth during the cleaning process. If this occurs further treatment may be required.
- **Bleeding and bruising:** if you take any drugs to thin your blood, you are more likely to get a bruise as the medication affects the way the body clots your blood.
- **Local anaesthetic:** failure of local anaesthetic; you may require a further injection of anaesthesia or a different method of anaesthesia to be used. An allergic reaction to local anaesthetic is a rare complication however, medical attention should be sought immediately.
- **Injury to nerves:** irritation to nerves during root canal treatment can cause temporary, permanent or prolonged numbness, a tingling sensation or a weakness to the lip, tongue, cheek, chin, gums or teeth. A small percentage of people may experience partial or total loss of feeling in the area served by the nerves close to the extraction site despite all the precautions. Permanent nerve damage rarely happens.
- ***NB If you have any questions or concerns please talk to your dentist prior to your treatment.***