



Root Canal Therapy Informed Consent

What is root canal treatment?

The root canal system of the tooth extends from the crown (top of the tooth) to the end of the root (bottom of the tooth) and contains the pulp. Pulp is the soft tissue at the centre of the tooth. Root canal treatment, which is sometimes referred to as a 'root canal', is the removal of infected or inflamed pulp.

When is root canal treatment needed?

You may have visited the dental practitioner if you had symptoms of a pulp infection such as:

- pain when eating or drinking hot or cold food or drink
- pain when biting or chewing on a loose tooth
- swelling of the gum near the infected tooth
- pus oozing from around the infected tooth
- facial swelling
- the tooth getting darker in colour.

An x-ray of your tooth may show the cause of pain or infection. Antibiotics are not always effective in treating root canal infections.

The two treatment options are removing the tooth or having a root canal treatment.

What are the benefits of root canal treatment?

Saving your tooth with a root canal has the benefits of:

- a better bite and more efficient chewing
- keeping your natural teeth
- protecting your other teeth from wear and tear.

What happens during root canal treatment?

- Your dental practitioner will take x-rays of the tooth and the area around it.
- The tooth area will usually be numbed with a local anaesthetic.
- Your tooth may then be covered with a small rubber sheet that isolates the tooth being treated from the rest of the mouth.
- All tooth decay will be removed.
- The dental practitioner will gain access to the pulp chamber through the top part of the tooth.
- The pulp will be removed from the crown and roots. The root canals are cleaned and completely filled with a natural latex material.
- The tooth is sealed with a filling or a crown. A crown completely covers the real tooth.
- A root canal may take several hours and/or be completed over several appointments.

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, how well you keep your teeth clean, and the biting forces on the tooth.

Common risks and complications include:

- mild temporary pain due to inflammation of the tissues surrounding the tooth
- tooth darkening
- a darker tooth: there are procedures available which may lighten the tooth if this occurs
- tooth fracture: due to reduced strength and durability of the tooth this may lead to tooth extraction. This risk is reduced when a crown is used.
- Extrusion through the end of the root of the root canal material or cement. This may or may not cause some discomfort after the completion of the root canal and may lead to the need to re-treat the tooth. In most cases this is not a problem and may facilitate a good seal at the end of the tooth and not compromise the success of the treatment.

Uncommon risks and complications include:

- the fine metal files used to clean inside the root canals may break during use and remain in the tooth, and the tooth may need to be removed
- depending on the size and shape of the roots, there is some risk of creating a hole in the side of a tooth root during the cleaning process
- severe or persistent pain: return to your treating dental practitioner
- infection: return to your treating dental practitioner
- treatment failure: the tooth may require further treatment or extraction if it is unable to be saved

If an issue arises from any of the above complications it will be discussed with you and a course of action, if needed, planned with your agreement.

What are the risks and complications of a local anaesthetic during a dental procedure?

This procedure will require a local anaesthetic.

Reactions, either mild or severe, may possibly occur from anesthetics or other medications administered or prescribed. All prescription drugs must be taken according to instructions. Women using oral contraceptives must be aware that antibiotics can render these contraceptives ineffective. Other methods of contraception must be utilized during the treatment period.