

# The Facts About Root Canal Treatment

## Why Root Canal Treatment?

If you have been told that a root canal is necessary to save one of your teeth, it is important that you understand why this procedure is necessary and what happens during root canal treatment.

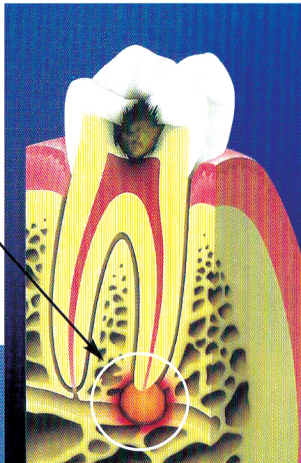
Root canal treatment (endodontics) treats disorders of the nerve (also called the pulp) of the tooth. It used to be that a tooth with a diseased or infected nerve had to be removed. In 95% of the cases today, however, this is no longer true. We believe in saving teeth instead of removing them. We make every effort to help you keep your natural teeth for a lifetime!

## What Makes a Root Canal Necessary?

The following are the most common factors contributing to a need for root canal treatment:

- Infection caused by deep decay or a very large filling

If a cavity forms and is allowed to go untreated for too long, it can penetrate to the root pulp where an infection can occur.



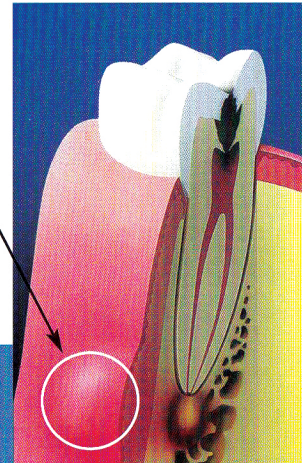
- Severe gum disease
- Trauma, such as a physical blow to a tooth or a constant striking of a tooth in the opposite jaw that traumatizes the tooth

Regardless of the initial cause, the tooth pulp becomes irritated and infected. Bacteria grow within the tooth pulp, causing pressure and pain, sometimes accompanied by swelling of the face. Sometimes the deterioration of the pulp happens so gradually that little pain is felt. Either way, eventually the bacteria can destroy the pulp. As this happens, the bone surrounding the tooth may become infected and abscessed, which may lead to the destruction of the bone surrounding the tooth.

## What Happens During Treatment?

If we determine through x-rays and a clinical examination that root canal treatment is necessary, we will schedule a series of appointments for you. It is important that you keep these appointments to prevent delays in treatment and healing, which can affect the outcome. It's also essential that you take all medications prescribed to hasten healing and reduce swelling.

When the root pulp is affected in this way, the root can become *abscessed*, causing swelling and pain.



1. First, we want to relieve any discomfort you might be experiencing and ensure your comfort throughout the treatment. When necessary, an anesthetic will be used to numb the tooth and surrounding area. The tooth will be carefully isolated, which confines the treatment area and protects the rest of the mouth during treatment. An opening will be made through the crown of the tooth into the pulp.
2. We will carefully remove the diseased pulp. The root canal area inside your tooth will be cleaned, enlarged and shaped. Then, depending on your individual case, the root canal and pulp chamber may be permanently filled and sealed.  
In some cases, we place a temporary medication in the tooth to control bacterial growth and reduce infection.
3. A temporary filling will be placed in the opening of the tooth until the next visit. In some cases, the tooth may be left open in order to allow the infection to drain. We will decide what is right for your individual case and do whatever is necessary to assure your comfort.
4. At the next appointment, we will thoroughly clean the inside of the tooth to remove any additional bacteria. Throughout the root canal procedure, we will take x-rays to ensure that all

A portion of your tooth enamel is removed to give access to the root. The diseased root pulp is then removed.

