

Will my tooth be weakened by the treatment?

It is generally thought that root treated teeth are not as strong as normal ones. Whether this will necessitate further treatment to strengthen the tooth will depend upon its position in the mouth and the amount of damage or decay that led to the root canal treatment in the first place. Your dentist will advise whether it is necessary to have a crown or other restoration fitted for extra strength.

Is there an alternative to root canal treatment?

Once the tooth has become non-vital and an abscess has developed, the only alternative to root canal treatment would be to have the tooth extracted. This is because pulp is unable to heal and it is inadvisable to leave an infected tooth in the mouth.

How do I care for my teeth after root canal treatment?

There are no special precautions after root canal treatment. You can eat quite normally and brush or floss your teeth as usual. As always, you should avoid biting hard objects such as pens, hard foods and finger nails. Regular check-ups with your dentist and hygienist are essential to maintain the health of your teeth and gums.



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ROOT CANAL TREATMENT

PATIENT
INFORMATION
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What is a root canal?

The root canal is the area inside the centre of the tooth that houses the nerve and blood supply. This becomes a larger space towards the top of the tooth known as the 'pulp'. Some teeth have only one root canal whilst larger teeth towards the back of the mouth can have up to four.

When would I need root canal treatment?

Root canal (or endodontic) treatment is needed when the pulp becomes affected by decay or trauma. In these situations, it can become infected leading to inflammation and pain. In more severe cases the tooth can become 'non-vital', which means that it loses its blood supply altogether. Once the pulp becomes infected, the bacteria can spread through the root canal system and lead to the development of an abscess.



What does the treatment involve?

Root canal treatment aims to remove all infection and debris from the infected tooth. It is a skilled and time-consuming procedure that usually requires two or more visits. This treatment is complex because the dentist is working inside the tooth to very small tolerances. Root canal treatment consists of the following stages:

- Removing the remains of the infected pulp and, if an abscess is present, allowing it to drain
- Cleaning and shaping of the root canal ready for filling
- Putting in a temporary filling
- Checking the tooth at a later visit, to ensure that the infection is cleared and if so, filling the canal permanently
- Restoring the rest of the tooth

Do root treatments always work?

Root canal treatments are usually successful and the infection is eradicated. If infection recurs, the treatment can be repeated. In rare instances it is possible to lose a tooth due to recurring infection.

Are root canal treatments comfortable?

As with all modern dental techniques, local anaesthetics make root canal treatments comfortable. Your experience of having this kind of treatment should be little different to that of having a normal filling. Sometimes the treated tooth can be tender to pressure, such as biting, for a day or two after the treatment, this usually subsides quite quickly.

Will root canal treatment change the colour of my tooth?

A tooth that has had root treatment can darken in colour over time. This used to happen more frequently than it does today since modern techniques have improved the process. If there is any discolouration, there are several treatments that can be undertaken to give the tooth a more natural appearance. For example, it is possible to lighten root treated teeth, or alternatively, your dentist may suggest that the tooth should be crowned or veneered.

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