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ROOT CANAL TREATMENT

Root Canal Treatment (RCT) is needed when the blood or nerve supply to the tooth, or pulp is infected through decay or injury. It is most often needed in teeth that have very large or deep fillings, or in teeth which have encountered trauma. Below are some commonly asked questions?

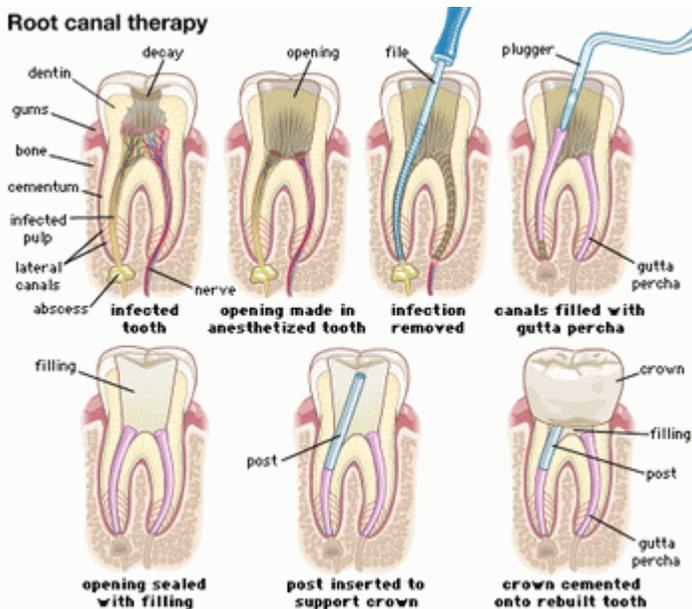
WHY IS ROOT CANAL TREATMENT NEEDED?

If the pulp becomes infected, the infection spreads through the root canal system of the tooth which may eventually lead to an abscess.

DOES ROOT CANAL TREATMENT HURT?

No. A local anaesthetic is generally used and the procedure feels no different to having a normal filling done.

WHAT DOES THE TREATMENT INVOLVE?



The aim of treatment is to remove all infection and debris from the root canal. The tooth is firstly opened through the top surface and the root canals accessed by a needlelike instrument

called a file, and the infected dead nerve is removed. The inside of the tooth is then disinfected with a strong antiseptic solution.

The inside of the root is then cleaned and filed smooth to prevent any future infection. Depending on the severity of the infection and the complexity of the root canal system, this process can be quite time consuming.

Once the canals are sterile, they are then dried and filled with a rubber based material called Gutta Percha which heated and compressed into the root canals to permanently seal it.

WHAT IF THE INFECTION RETURNS?

Root canal treatment is successful in 80-90% of cases. However, there is a risk of recurrent infection which many require treatment by a specialist Endodontist. In occasional cases when a root canal treatment has failed, the only option remaining is to extract the tooth.

WHAT ARE THE ALTERNATIVES TO ROOT CANAL TREATMENT?

The only alternative to root canal treatment is to have the tooth extracted. Once the pulp is damaged, it cannot heal without treatment and it is not recommended to leave an infected tooth in the mouth.

ARE THERE ANY RISKS INVOLVED?

There is a moderate risk of pain and swelling immediately following treatment for a few days afterwards. This is normally easily controlled by over-the counter painkillers but can occasionally be more severe.

As with any surgery they are risks associated with root canal treatment:

- An inability to completely fill the root canal because the canal is calcified or has a unique root curvature.
- Chronic infection may occur or may continue, even after repeated attempts to sterilize the root.
- Due to the reduced strength of a non-vital tooth, fracture or breakage of the root or crown portion during or after the treatment.
- Inadvertent breakage of files or instrument tips within the canal system that is unable to be retrieved.

In some cases complications may necessitate extraction of the tooth or referral to a specialist endodontist.

WILL THE TOOTH BE SAFE AFTER TREATMENT?

Root filled teeth are weaker and more brittle than vital teeth, for this reason it is highly recommended to restore the root-filled tooth with a crown to provide artificial strength. It is sometimes advisable to wait a few months prior to crowning to ensure the tooth is symptomless. A root filled tooth can be filled with composite resin material but this will not provide the strength that a root filled tooth will require long term.

WHAT ABOUT AFTER CARE?

Root filled tooth should be treated the same as any other tooth. It is advisable to remember though that a non-crowned root filled tooth is not as strong as a natural tooth.

WHAT ABOUT PAYMENT FOR ROOT FILLINGS?

Root canal treatment is usually spread over three visits and each visit can be paid for immediately following treatment to avoid a large account at the end of treatment. The cost of root filling will depend on which tooth is being treated and an accurate fee can be sought from either your dentist or reception.

The information contained in this leaflet is only a summary of root canal treatment and does not contain all the facts available so should only be used as a guide. It does not replace personal discussion with your dentist. Please consult your dentist with any questions you may have.

For appointments please call:

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