

# Root Canal Treatment

saving teeth

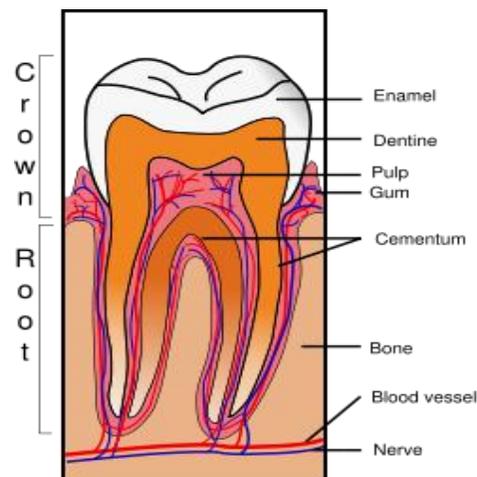
## What is Root Canal Treatment?

Endodontic or “Root Canal” Treatment is used to save teeth that, in the past, would have been extracted. It is a very common treatment used to restore teeth where the pulp has been injured or diseased.

Saving your natural tooth is often the best option compared to more costly or inefficient substitutes.

## What is the Pulp?

The pulp or ‘nerve’ of the tooth is made up of soft tissue containing blood vessels, nerves and connective tissue. Root canal treatment removes this pulp and replaces it with a filling material. The pulp is found within a chamber in the crown of a tooth and runs down through a canal in each root of the tooth. Depending on the tooth, it may have up to four canals.



### How the Pulp Becomes Damaged

There are many ways in which the pulp can become infected or inflamed, including:

- Deep decay
- Trauma from a blow or fall
- Decay under old fillings
- Severely worn down teeth
- Some types of gum disease
- Severe grinding of teeth

### The Signs of Pulp Damage

- Sensitivity to hot and cold food and drinks
- Sensitivity or pain to biting
- Abscess
- Swelling

Sometimes the pulp can degenerate quietly without any symptoms and the problem is seen only with an x-ray.

### Protecting with a Crown

Large fillings can be weak and may be at risk of breaking. Sometimes the tooth can become brittle and at risk of fracturing. The dentist will recommend placing a crown on weakened teeth. The crown will protect the tooth and the root canal treatment.

### What the Treatment Involves

Several visits are required to treat the tooth. Each visit may be a few weeks apart to allow time for the tooth to heal. X-rays are taken at various times to help the dentist determine the length and location of the canals and to see how well the tooth is responding to treatment.

**Step One:** After giving a local anaesthetic and isolating the tooth with a rubber sheet (rubber dam), an access hole is made through the crown of the tooth or through the filling if it is present. Any decay is removed. Very fine instruments are used to start to clean out the nerve from the canals. An antibiotic dressing and temporary filling are placed on the tooth.

**Step two:** At the next visit, the dressings are removed and further cleaning of the canals is performed. Using the fine instruments, the dentist removes all the pulp tissue and then widens and shapes the canals. Another medicament and temporary filling is placed.

**Step three:** At this visit the cleaned and disinfected canals are filled with a specialised filling material and cement. It is important to fill in the canals to prevent bacteria from reforming and reinfected the tooth. By this stage, the tooth should show no signs or symptoms. Please inform the dentist if you have felt any discomfort since the last visit.

**Step four:** The tooth is restored with a permanent filling material. Where a lot of tooth structure has been lost, a post may be cemented into a canal to strengthen the filling.