



GET THE FACTS ABOUT ROOT CANALS

Many people when they hear the words “root canal” become a little anxious, but the truth is that there is nothing to fear. Having a root canal will actually relieve your toothache pain and help to keep you from having a tooth extracted.

The reason that root canal has such a scary reputation is that there are several popular misconceptions regarding the subject. Some of these ideas linger from long ago, before the age of modern dental anesthesia and the advanced technology that we benefit from today. Other fears spring from the fact that many people wait until they are experiencing a severe toothache to see the dentist. Perhaps, the best way to clear the air and feel more at ease with the idea of a root canal is to have a better understanding of why the procedure may be needed and how it is performed.

Root canal happens to be a very common dental treatment. According to recent statistics in the United States alone almost 41,000 root canals are performed every day and close to 15 million are done over the course of a year. Because it has high success rate, a root canal procedure is considered one of the most effective methods of saving



and retaining a tooth that has been severely compromised by dental decay or injury.

Your teeth are much more than just the hard outer biting surfaces and the roots. Inside of each one is a central chamber that contains connective tissue, a nerve supply, and blood vessels. Collectively these core tissues, known as the dental pulp, help your tooth to grow

and mature before it emerges into the mouth. Once your tooth is in place, the dental pulp provides nourishment, keeps the tooth vital, and alerts you of problems. Having sensitivity to various stimuli like biting down and eating or drinking hot or cold items is a warning from the nerves inside your tooth that dental decay is present, dental trauma

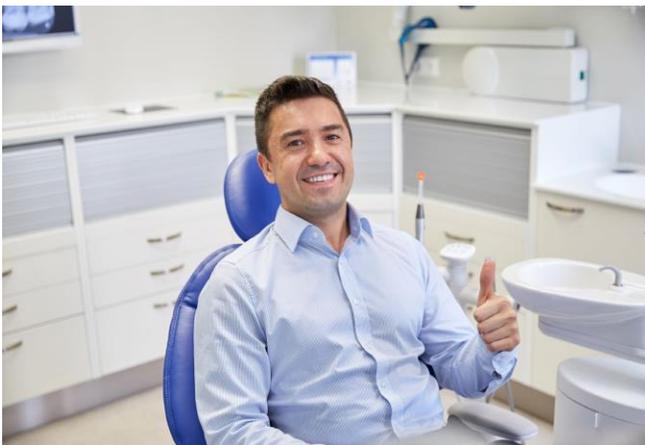


has occurred, or an infection is brewing. The degree of pain that you experience depends on the extent of the damage and nerve involvement.

If your dentist informs you that a tooth needs a root canal it is because the dental pulp has become irreversibly damaged or has died. However, if enough intact tooth structure remains and there is healthy bone support around the compromised tooth, you do not need to have the tooth extracted. A fully developed tooth does not require the dental pulp to remain functional. You can preserve your natural tooth by having your dentist perform a root canal on the tooth. During this procedure your dentist will remove the diseased dental pulp, clean the internal portion of your tooth, and then fill all the prepared canals with a biocompatible filling material. Once the canals have been sealed off and the tooth is symptom free, your dentist may then recommend placing a crown on the tooth. This will protect the tooth while restoring its optimal form and function.

It is important when a root canal is recommended to begin care promptly. Delaying the procedure increases your risk of more widespread symptoms developing. Left untreated a dental infection can develop or worsen and have serious consequences to your overall health.

With the modern dental instruments and advanced techniques available today having a root canal procedure is often as comfortable, and no more complex, than



getting a routine dental filling. While some root canals can be completed in one visit, others may involve 2 or 3 appointments. How long it takes depends on factors such as the number of canals in a tooth, their anatomy and whether an active infection is present. Once your dentist evaluates the situation, you will be informed of the treatment plan. If your tooth poses significant technical challenges, or requires a special

procedure, you may be referred to an endodontist.



As with all health procedures there are a small percentage of cases where a root canal procedure does not work. However, even some of these cases will respond to retreatment or an additional procedure. The most important statistic to keep in mind is that more than 95% of root canals are successful!

Root canal therapy when needed is a beneficial procedure that will relieve your pain, allow you to keep your natural teeth, and let you once again enjoy your smile! With proper maintenance and care teeth that have been treated with root canals can last a lifetime.