

# **Background Information for Patients Considering Root Canal Treatment**

When a tooth has been subjected to extensive dental decay, trauma or disease the nerve or pulp in the tooth may become irreversibly inflamed/infected and die. In such cases root canal treatment is indicated to save the tooth.

The pulp lies within the crown of the tooth and travels down the root of each tooth in a fine canal (hence the term root canal). Molar teeth usually have 3-4 root canals, premolar teeth 1-2 root canals and front teeth usually only have 1 root canal.

The cost of root canal treatment depends on the number of root canals that a tooth has.

Root canal treatment involves the removal of the infected pulp from the tooth, disinfection of the root canal(s) and then filling of the root canal(s). This is usually completed in 2-3 visits. Please note that an additional appointment is usually required to place a filling in the tooth.

At the initial visit an X-ray will be taken to determine the number and shape of the roots/root canal(s) the tooth to be treated has. After numbing the tooth the infected pulp tissue is then removed from each of the canal(s) with a series of specialised files. The root canals are then cleaned and shaped further and cleaned out with a special antiseptic rinse. Finally an accurate measurement of each canal is made and another X-ray is taken to confirm this measurement. A special dressing is then placed and sealed in the tooth. Normally the tooth is then left for a week or two before the next visit.

At the second appointment the dressing is removed from the tooth and again the canals are cleaned with a special antiseptic rinse. The tooth is then thoroughly dried and the root filling material can be placed into each root canal. A final X-ray is then taken to ensure that each canal is filled completely.

Sometimes it is necessary to re-dress the tooth at the second appointment and even prescribe antibiotics if there are still signs of infection present. In these cases the tooth is left for another couple of weeks before placing the root filling.

## **What are the alternatives to Root Canal Treatment?**

Extraction is the only alternative for a tooth with an infected, dead or dying pulp. Although removal of the offending tooth is quicker and less costly than saving the tooth with root canal treatment it is important that you are aware that removing the tooth may result in some of the following problems

- May cause cosmetic concerns.
- May cause chewing/biting difficulties.
- Tooth movement may occur with nearby teeth drifting into the space that is left. This can potentially make other teeth more prone to dental decay and gum disease, as maligned teeth are more difficult to clean. This tooth movement may also cause interferences to your normal bite, which can result in jaw problems.

It is true that extracted teeth can be replaced by various artificial means such as dentures, bridge and implants. Some important points to be aware of in relation to artificial replacements are that:

- The cost of replacing a tooth is usually always more than that of saving it with root canal therapy in the first place.
- However good the replacement is it will always only be a substitute for your own tooth and hence may have limited function and appearance.

## **Possible Problem's/Complications with Root Canal Therapy.**

Like all dental treatment no guarantee's can be given in relation to the long-term success of treatment. Unforeseen circumstances may arise during treatment that may compromise successful root canal treatment. *It is important to note that root canal therapy will not be suggested if it is unlikely to succeed.*

### **Important points to be aware of are:**

- It is important to note that some discomfort following each stage of root canal treatment may be experienced. This is considered to be normal and is usually resolved with over the counter pain medications. If you experience more severe pain you should contact us immediately.
- After a tooth has had root canal therapy it must be sealed by placing a final filling. Some teeth are weakened after root canal therapy and may need restoration with a crown to strengthen the tooth.
- Root fillings can and do sometimes fail, with re-infection of the root canal occurring. This can usually be treated by re-doing the root canal treatment, specialist referral or by endodontic surgery.
- Although unlikely, it is possible for the very fine files and rotary instruments used to clean the root canals may fracture during treatment. If any unforeseen difficulties/complications such as this arise during treatment it may be necessary to refer you to an endodontist (a dentist who is specialised in root canal treatment) to complete the treatment.

*Finally if you should have any further queries please do not hesitate to ask.*

# Consent for Treatment:

*(Root Canal Treatment)*

*This is my consent for «provider.name» to provide the dental care as indicated on my treatment plan/quotation*

- I have read the provided background information and ADA handout for this course of treatment.
- I have received a written quotation and am clear on the costs involved in this course of treatment.
- I am aware and accept that root canal therapy has limitations. I am aware of the potential complications for this procedure.
- I am aware that specialist referral is available for this procedure
- Other treatment options (I.e. extraction of the tooth) and costs have been discussed.

<i>Signed by Patient or parent if minor</i>			
<i>Print Full Name</i>			
<i>Signed by Staff member</i>		<i>Date</i>	/ /