



Root Canal Treatment (Endodontics)

Root Canal Treatment (endodontics) is necessary when the blood or nerve supply of the tooth (pulp) is damaged due to decay or injury. It is most often needed in teeth that have deep fillings, or in teeth that have deep dental decay. If the pulp becomes infected or inflamed, bacteria may spread through the root canal system of the tooth, eventually leading to an abscess. If Root Canal Treatment (RCT) is not performed, the infection will spread and the tooth may need to be extracted.

What does root canal treatment involve?

The first aim of root canal treatment is to get the patient out of pain. The infected pulp is removed and any infection is drained. The root canals are then cleaned, disinfected and shaped until ready for the permanent root filling. Once the dentist is confident that the infection is gone, the root filling (a specialised thermoplastic material) is compressed into the canals to permanently seal them.

In some cases a normal filling is then needed on top of the root filling to restore and seal the tooth. This procedure can involve two or more appointments to complete treatment. At The Keith Dental Practice the success rate of root canal treatment is high.



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

Why we use a Dental Microscope

The dental microscope enables us to obtain much higher definition and utilise better lighting, which significantly enhances our ability to see in detail. We can see internal cracks, accessory canals, and other areas that are invisible without the use of the microscope. Enhanced visibility enables us to increase the success rate of every procedure.

Does it hurt?

With the use of local anaesthetic techniques the treatment is normally quite comfortable. It should not be too dissimilar to having a routine filling, although the appointment will be slightly longer.

There may be some tenderness following treatment but it can be controlled by the use of medication of the type one might use for a headache and is usually only required for 24 hours.

When would you advise against having root canal treatment?

Sometimes a tooth may be in a condition where RCT is not worthwhile; for instance teeth that have no useful function, teeth badly affected by gum disease, teeth that have split and teeth that cannot be reliably restored after RCT. If your oral condition is very poor and you have uncontrolled decay or periodontal problems, you will need to control these problems before embarking on root-treatment.



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Can the treatment fail?

Root canal treatment can have success rate of up to 90% in general if carried out to a good standard allowing the tooth to remain in function. Problems can occur if the tooth develops decay or the restoration on the tooth fails, or on occasions despite good care the tooth may not heal as expected. Further root canal treatment may be carried out if appropriate. If a tooth has a particularly difficult shape or a complication arises e.g. if the tooth develops a crack, it may require extraction.

Are there any risks?

- There is a moderate risk of pain and swelling immediately following treatment and for a few days afterwards. This is normally relieved by over-the-counter painkillers but can occasionally be more severe.
- Sometimes there can be a spreading infection from the tooth, which may need antibiotics.
- Root-canal instruments are very fragile- there is a possibility that one may break inside the tooth. Although in most cases it can be retrieved.
- The root filling may sometimes extend beyond the tip of the root, or may not completely fill the root to the tip.
- The tooth may be "perforated" (this is when a hole is made through the side of the tooth when searching for small canals) – this can often be repaired.

Any of these complications may compromise the prognosis for the tooth and delay or prevent healing. In some cases a serious complication may necessitate extraction of the tooth.



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What happens after I have had root canal treatment?

Sometimes a root treated tooth will darken after treatment. If any discolouration does take place, there are various cosmetic treatments available to restore the natural appearance of the tooth.

Root filled teeth are weaker and more brittle than live teeth. For this reason it is often advisable to restore the root-filled tooth with a core and crown or onlay to reinforce the tooth.

Finding out more is easy...

To find out more, or to book in for a consultation, simply give us a call on the number below or email us:



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