

Root Canal Treatment

What is root canal treatment?

Root canal treatment (otherwise known as endodontic treatment) is a procedure to remove damaged or decayed 'pulp'. Pulp is the name used to describe the blood and nerve supply that stretches into the root of the tooth through the root canal. The canal is removed of decay and filled in during the root canal treatment.

Who can benefit from having root canal treatment?

Root canal treatment is usually the best option for someone whose pulp has become infected or damaged. This may be because of an untreated cavity in the tooth where the infection has eventually filtered down into the pulp. Other reasons include damage to the pulp via injury or repeated dental procedures within the tooth. Gum disease may also lead to the need for root canal treatment.

Procedure

Root canal treatment usually takes place under a local anesthetic. A hole is drilled through the tooth and any decayed pulp removed. The root is then cleaned, measured and enlarged to receive the filler. Once filled, either a temporary filling (if you need to go back for a second visit), or a permanent filling is placed into the tooth. The permanent filling is used to seal the tooth shut – a crown may also be fitted onto the surface of the tooth to help protect it, depending on the extent of decay to the tooth structure. You may need to have treatment over several visits depending on which tooth, and how many are affected.

Recovery period

Following your root canal treatment you should not encounter any more pain, although your tooth may be sensitive for a few days and you may experience some swelling (you can take painkillers for this). It is important to maintain good oral hygiene, and to avoid chewing or biting down hard on the tooth for a short while after your root canal treatment. Your tooth will be monitored by your dentist to make sure that it is healing successfully.

Risks

Complications following root canal treatment include bleeding, swelling, pain, infection and incomplete treatment of the root canal resulting in the need for a second treatment.