

Why do I need a root canal?

There are many reasons why teeth require root canal treatments. We will review the following:

1-The number one reason teeth need root canals is because there is/was extensive decay in your tooth. You may or may not have pain even though your tooth needs a root canal to save it. The decay either touches the nerve or is very close and stresses the tooth so that the nerve needs to be removed to prevent a future abscess or toothache.

2-Your tooth is abscessed and to clean up the infection a root canal treatment needs to be performed to get rid of the pus and infection. You may or may not have a swelling on your gum or face.

3-Your tooth is cracked and has pain. If the tooth root is not cracked then a root canal treatment can help you save your tooth.

Will it hurt?

During the procedure we will numb your tooth just like we would for a filling. Therefore, we do all we can to make the procedure as comfortable as possible. Some toothaches are causing so much pain that it is difficult to numb certain teeth. Once your tooth is numb you will not feel the root canal treatment. You will feel a little vibration and hear a very quiet noise while we clean your root canals. After the root canal treatment is complete the tooth will be sore to touch for 2-3 days and if you bite on it you may feel some discomfort. Usually, Ibuprofen (Advil or Motrin) helps relieve any pain. The tooth heals very quickly and soon you will be back to normal function.

Will my insurance cover this?

Most insurance companies pay for a portion of root canal treatments. It usually costs them less in the long run if you can save your tooth than have to replace it with something false. Root canal treatment can be costly but it is an excellent way to save your tooth rather than pulling an infected tooth. We will check with your insurance company to see if they cover the treatment. We have multiple payment arrangements available; please ask us. We always recommend a nice core build up filling or post and core in the root canal treated tooth after the root canal treatment is complete. On back teeth we recommend crowns to cover and protect your tooth to prevent it from cracking. Because your tooth was compromised by decay and loss of tooth structure it could break after the tooth is treated if it is not completely covered. Therefore, there are always at least two or three steps to save a tooth that needs a root canal. 1-Perform the root canal treatment. 2-Put a nicely sealed filling in the tooth within a short period of time after the root canal is finished. 3- Crown the tooth.

Why not just pull the tooth?

Yes pulling the tooth is an option. But usually it is better to save a tooth. When teeth are removed prematurely, the teeth behind and above the space tend to drift. This usually occurs within 5 years. Also, when teeth are pulled you lose bone where the tooth used to be and it usually cannot be replaced. If you are planning on replacing the missing tooth, sometimes it actually costs more to replace the tooth than save it. Obviously, if you pull a tooth and don't replace it, it is harder to chew.

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