

Root Canal Treatment

Root Canal Treatment Advice

What Is Root Canal Treatment (Endodontics)

This is a micro-surgical treatment to remove material from within the root systems of teeth. It is also known as root treatment and sometimes 'taking the nerve out'. The removal of this material is necessary if it is infected or likely to become infected, following previous decay or trauma. Once the root system is cleaned it is then shaped to receive a permanent root filling usually in the form of a flexible rubber called gutta percha.

When Is Root Treatment Necessary

Root treatment is an option if the tooth is infected. This usually follows from decay in the crown of the tooth invading the living contents of the tooth pulp and root canals. It may also be necessary following trauma to a tooth. An infected tooth can cause pain characterised by a constant pain, pain on biting or touch. It can also be diagnosed from radiographs (x-rays). The alternative option for root treatment is extraction of the tooth. Sometimes it may be necessary to stabilise the infection prior to treatment with antibiotics but they are not routine.

How Is It Performed

Treatment is often very intricate and complex so it will require some time and may involve magnification. Treatment is usually performed with local anaesthetic in either one or two visits depending on the complexity and available time. To isolate the mouth from disinfectants rubber dam is placed. This is a sheet that covers all the teeth apart from the tooth involved. It should also be noted that due to equipment and experience requirements, it may be necessary to refer the procedure to another colleague.

What Are the Outcomes Following Treatment

Dependent on the underlying condition of the tooth, the outcomes are variable. For example if the infection is diagnosed early and the canals are straightforward to prepare, then the prognosis can be over 85% at 5 years. Most treated teeth will go on to last much longer than this. In complex anatomy, difficult access or larger infections then the prognosis will be reduced. A prognosis is an estimate and patients will report individual experiences.

Once a tooth has been root treated it may become more brittle or discoloured. In many cases a crown will be required to strengthen the teeth and a separate fee will be payable.

Post-operative Care After Root Canal Treatment

As stated previously, this is a micro-surgical procedure and the area can become sore. It will be expected that there is some pain on biting and discomfort after treatment. This can usually be treated with anti-inflammatory pain killers such as ibuprofen (Nurofen) if you are suitable, otherwise paracetamol. In a small number of cases discomfort can persist after three days and further treatment will be required which may include antibiotics.

Key Points

- **Micro-surgical treatment to remove infection within a tooth.**
- **Alternative is an extraction.**
- **The outcome and prognosis is variable.**
- **The tooth may require a crown following treatment.**
- **Antibiotics may be required but are not routine.**
- **Complex treatment over one or two visits.**
- **The tooth will be tender following treatment.**
- **Take ibuprofen (Nurofen) to control discomfort if you are suitable.**
- **Contact the clinic if symptoms persist after three days.**