

ROOT CANAL

Inside every tooth is an area of blood vessels and nerves, known as the pulp. Root canals travel from the tooth's root into the pulp chamber. While normally protected by the hard outer shell, this chamber can be harmed by trauma, severe tooth decay, repeated dental procedures, large fillings, and other problems. When the pulp is damaged, bacteria begin to grow inside your tooth, causing an infection or abscessed tooth (when the infection spreads past the ends of the root). In this case, a root canal may be the only way to save your tooth. During this process, the pulp inside your tooth is removed, and the hollow space is cleaned and sealed.

Some signs that you may need root canal treatment are:

- Pain or throbbing while chewing
- Sensitivity to hot and cold
- Tender gums
- Darkening of the tooth

However, it is possible that you will have no symptoms.

PROCEDURE

A root canal is performed by your dentist or endodontist (a dentist who specializes

in the dental pulp/nerves). First an x-ray is taken to examine the root canal and check for signs of infection in the surrounding bone. After the tooth is anesthetized, the dentist drills through the crown into the tooth. The infected pulp is removed, and the canals are enlarged and shaped with root canal files. The inside is flushed thoroughly to remove all debris.

After cleaning, the tooth will be sealed, either at that time or a week later, depending on your situation. It may require a

week to clear up an infection, usually by placing medication inside the tooth. In that case, a temporary filling is used.

To fill the tooth permanently, a sealer paste and rubber compound is placed inside, and then the access hole is covered by a filling. Sometimes the damage may require additional work, such as a crown (a cap over the tooth), to strengthen the tooth.

Root canal treatment is over 95% successful, and your repaired tooth may last a lifetime with proper dental healthcare.

