



SAVING TEETH WITH ROOT CANAL THERAPY

Have you ever had a toothache? There is nothing that will bring us more agony or misery than a toothache. It is amazing that something so small as a little infection in a tooth can create so much pain! When a toothache happens it commands your entire and complete attention. You can't think of anything else, especially at night when you are trying to sleep. A generation ago, when this happened the dentist would just "pull" the tooth to get rid of the pain. This worked in relieving the pain, but having a missing tooth created another undesirable set of circumstances including losing your smile, having your cheek cave in, and diminished chewing effectiveness. Today we have a way of relieving your pain and keeping the benefits of having teeth by treating dental nerve infections with root canal therapy.

Dental root canals involve removing infected nerves of teeth that are housed in the internal canals of each tooth. Often the infection will travel through the entire canal and end up in the bone outside the end of the root of the tooth triggering an abscess. An abscess creates a lot of pressure in the bone because the pus of the infection swells up and there is nowhere for it to go to relieve that pressure. This makes the pain unbearable! The good news is that your dentist can open up the canal of the infected tooth, clean it out, and allow the pus to drain away. This provides almost immediate pain relief and allows you to keep your tooth. After the canal is all cleaned out, a root canal sealer and filler is placed to seal off the opening of that canal to help guard against possible future infections.

Once the root canal is completed only part of the job of saving that tooth is done. When you clean and hollow out the entire center of a tooth, that tooth becomes very structurally weak. Now the goal changes from removing infection to making the tooth strong again. Your dentist can fill in any remaining hollowed out areas of the tooth with a build up foundational filling to recreate the natural shape of the tooth. Afterwards, in most cases, the tooth is prepared to have a dental crown fit over it to make it strong again. Sometimes, someone will choose only to remove the pain of an infected tooth and leave the tooth unrestored. This leaves the tooth very, very weak and it soon gets infected again, breaks off, or becomes no longer savable.

Infection from decay is the most common cause of dental nerve pain. But over the lifetime of a tooth, many conditions can cause the nerve to become infected and to get sick. For example, old fillings, especially large, deep fillings, will irritate the nerve over time and make it painful. Also, clenching or grinding of your teeth can traumatize the nerves of teeth breaking them down, infecting the teeth and producing pain. Sometimes the nerves of teeth will die and cause no pain. So it's important to have your dentist take appropriate dental x-rays during your exams to determine the health of your mouth.

Contemporary dentistry gives you the choice to become healthy without pain and infection and still keep your teeth. Our parents can tell stories when having a toothache meant losing a tooth. This is still the case in many parts of the world. Root canal therapy is another example of how dentistry benefits your standard of living and your lifestyle. Because of the advancements in modern dentistry, we can be pain free, enjoy our food, and have a beautiful smile.

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