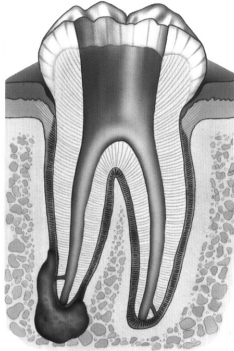
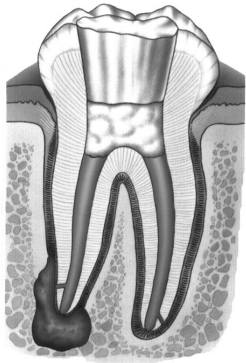


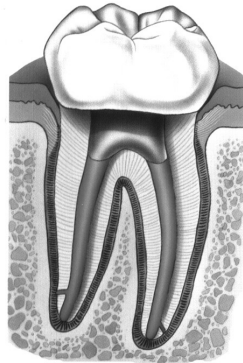
Infected tooth with abscess



Tooth cleaned out and shaped

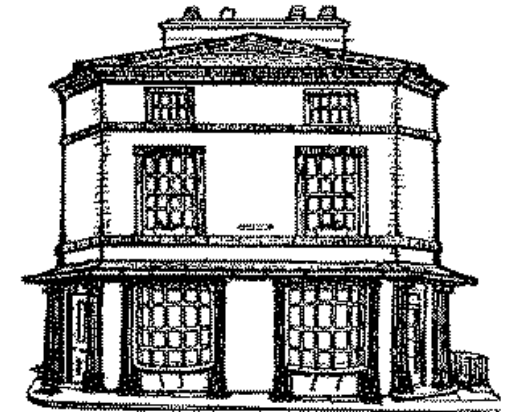


Temporary dressing placed



Tooth root filled and crown fitted

Root Canal Treatment (Endodontics)



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What is it?

Inside the roots of your teeth there are nerves and a blood supply. Decay, large restorations or injuries to the tooth can cause the nerves to die, and the dead nerves can then become infected causing an abscess at the end of the root. Root canal treatment, also called endodontics, involves removing the damaged or dead nerve and filling the space left to prevent further infections.

What does it involve?

An x-ray is usually taken to check the shape of the root canals and to see if there are any signs of infection in the surrounding bone. Some tooth roots are easier to fill than others because of their shape, and sometimes the x-ray will show that a root filling will not be successful. In this event the tooth will have to be taken out.

Root canal treatment is a highly skilled and time consuming procedure which usually involves two or three visits to the practice over a period of weeks.

At the first appointment the tooth is numbed up and the infected pulp removed. Any abscess present can then be drained, and the root canal is then cleaned and shaped. X-rays are usually taken to measure the length of the root canals. A temporary filling is then placed and the tooth left to settle.

At the second appointment, if the infection has cleared and the tooth has settled, the root canal can be filled. This does not usually require any anaesthetic as there is no nerve left inside the tooth. Another x-ray is usually taken to check the root filling in place. If the infection has not cleared the tooth will need to be cleaned out again and another temporary filling placed.

What happens next?

Root filled teeth sometimes darken after treatment. This does not always happen, and if there is any discolouration it is usually possible to correct the colour by bleaching the tooth or sometimes by placing a tooth coloured filling or a crown. Root filled teeth can also become brittle after treatment. In this case a crown is often the best option to provide extra support and strengthen the tooth.

Can the abscess come back?

Root canal treatment is normally quite successful, and those teeth which are tricky to treat can usually be identified on x-ray at an early stage. However, if the infection should come back the treatment can usually be repeated. Sometimes referral to a specialist may be necessary.

What is the alternative?

The alternative is to have the tooth out. Once the nerve has died and become infected it can flare up at any time. Antibiotics can be used to get rid of the infection but this is only a temporary solution – sooner or later the infection will return.