



Root canal treatment

This information sheet is made to help you understand what root canal treatment is, what the procedure involves and how they may benefit you, and the risks involved. For more information please ask any member of the Smileworks team.

Root canal treatment is a means of saving a tooth that has been damaged by deep decay, breakage, or infection. The purpose of treatment is to restore the tooth to good health so that it can function properly inside your mouth.

Why should a tooth need to be root treated?

Deep inside every tooth is a pulp chamber and root canals that contain living tissue called the pulp. The pulp is often mistakenly referred to as the 'nerve', but in fact it contains a fine network of tissue fibres, nerves, and blood vessels. If a large cavity in a tooth reaches the pulp chamber, or if a tooth breaks, bacteria can reach the pulp. These bacteria damage the pulp and eventually destroy it. The root canals become infected and inevitably an abscess forms beneath the root of the tooth, in the jawbone. This can cause severe pain.

How is a root canal treatment done?

The purpose of the treatment is to remove the bacteria from inside the tooth and to disinfect the root canals. This is achieved by making a small hole through the tooth into the pulp chamber, locating and measuring the root canals, then cleaning and widening them using fine instruments called files. Once clean, the canals are filled to seal them from re-infection. In most cases an abscess will start to heal at this point.

Does it hurt?

NO. Local anaesthesia is used throughout the procedure. With modern anaesthetic solutions, every possible step is taken to ensure that you are comfortable while the work is carried out. Following treatment you will be informed of the possibility of discomfort from the area. This is usually minor, and does not last long.

How long does the treatment take?

This can vary according to the complexity of the root canals, or if re-treatment is being carried out. Treatment appointments of between one to two hours may be required. On some occasions it may be possible to complete treatment in one extended appointment.

Is root canal treatment guaranteed?

Root canal treatment does enjoy a high level of success. However, it should be remembered that it is impossible to guarantee the success of any medical procedure. Even with the very best treatment, equipment and magnification, healing may not occur due to circumstances beyond the control of the dentist. Should this occur further steps may need to be taken to eradicate the infection, which may include re-treatment of the

root canal or extraction of the tooth, after which you may need to replace the tooth with a bridge, denture, implant, or to leave the space.

Benefits of root canal treatment

Root canal treatment means that you can save your tooth and retain it in the mouth. This means that chewing and speaking will not be affected. It is often less costly to save the tooth with root canal treatment than to replace the tooth with a false tooth by placing an implant or a bridge. Root canal treated teeth can survive for many years in some cases.

Risks of a Root Canal

A root canal is performed in an effort to save your tooth. Sometimes, however, the damage is too deep or the enamel is too frail to withstand the procedure. These factors can lead to loss of the tooth.

Another risk is developing an abscess at the root of the tooth if some of the infected material remains behind and antibiotics may not be effective.

A further risk involves use of the files, which can very rarely separate within the canal. In these cases it may be necessary to retrieve the files.

A root filled tooth can sometimes darken and often teeth that have had root canal treatments will need a crown placing on them in order to preserve the function and the appearance of the tooth. We will consider this and advise you when planning your treatment.

Sometimes we will advise you at Smileworks that we are unable to complete the root canal treatment here due to its complex nature and will need to refer you to a specialist in order to complete the treatment.

If you're apprehensive about a root canal, you can talk to your dentist about an extraction instead. We can discuss with you the replacement options for the tooth so that the space can be filled after removal of the tooth.

Am I suitable for root canal treatment?

Your dentist will advise you if you are suitable. You will need a good standard of oral hygiene and must make the commitment to attend regular check up and hygiene appointments so that your root treated tooth has the best possible chance of survival.

