

PATIENT INFORMATION · SURGICAL DENTISTRY

Root canal treatment

Treatment that aims to save a tooth with an infected or inflamed pulp.

What is it?

Root canal (endodontic) treatment treats infection or damage in the pulp, the soft tissue inside a tooth that contains nerves and blood vessels. The infected or inflamed pulp is removed, the canals are cleaned, shaped and sealed, and the tooth is protected with a filling or crown.

Laser disinfection with the Fotona LightWalker may be used as part of cleaning the canals.

Who it may help

- ✓ A tooth with deep decay or infection reaching the nerve
- ✓ Lingering sensitivity to hot or cold, or pain when biting
- ✓ A tooth that has been cracked or injured

Suitability depends on your individual situation and is confirmed after an examination.

How it works



1 Decay has reached the pulp, the soft tissue inside the tooth, causing inflammation or infection.



2 The pulp is removed, and the canals are cleaned, shaped and disinfected.



3 The canals are filled and sealed with a rubber-like material (gutta-percha).



4 A filling, and often a crown, protects the tooth.

Simplified illustration, not to scale. Your own treatment may differ.

What to expect

- 1 Diagnosis.** An examination and X-rays show whether root canal treatment is needed.
- 2 Numbing.** The tooth is numbed with local anaesthetic. Many people say it feels similar to having a filling.
- 3 Cleaning the canals.** A small opening is made, the pulp is removed, and the canals are cleaned, shaped and disinfected.
- 4 Sealing.** The canals are filled with gutta-percha and the opening is sealed with a temporary or long-term filling.
- 5 Protecting the tooth.** A crown is often recommended, especially for back teeth.

Treatment may take one or more visits, depending on the tooth and the infection.

Things to consider

- **Tenderness:** the tooth can feel tender for a few days
- **Weaker tooth:** treated teeth can become brittle, so a crown is often recommended
- **Not always successful:** re-infection is possible, and further treatment or extraction may be needed

Any surgical or invasive procedure carries risks. Before proceeding, you should seek a second opinion from an appropriately qualified health practitioner.

Aftercare

- ✓ **Instructions:** follow your dentist's advice on pain relief and cleaning
- ✓ **Chewing:** avoid chewing on the tooth until it has its long-term filling or crown
- ✓ **Cleaning:** keep brushing and flossing as normal around the treated tooth

General guidance only. Always follow the specific instructions your dentist gives you.

Costs & health funds

Fees depend on your treatment and are confirmed after an examination, with a written estimate before planned treatment starts. Your health fund rebate depends on your fund, level of extras cover, annual limits and waiting periods. We can claim on the spot with Tyro, so on the day you pay any gap. All health funds are welcome.

Call (08) 9330 7115 if you have heavy bleeding, pain or swelling that gets worse, fever, or anything that worries you. For trouble breathing or swallowing, call 000.

Questions to ask your dentist

- ? Why does this tooth need root canal treatment, and what are the alternatives?
- ? How many visits will it take?
- ? Will I need a crown afterwards?
- ? What should I do if the tooth is still sore after a few days?
- ? What are the chances of re-infection for this tooth?
- ? What will it cost overall, including the crown?

Before your appointment

- ✓ Have a normal meal beforehand: you may be numb for a few hours afterwards
- ✓ Appointments can take 60 to 90 minutes: bring headphones if music helps you relax
- ✓ Tell us about any changes to your health or medicines since your last visit
- ✓ Your Medicare card and health fund card, for on-the-spot claiming with Tyro
- ✓ A DVA or concession card, if you have one
- ✓ A list of your medicines, including blood thinners and supplements

General guidance only. Always follow your dentist's specific instructions.

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