

What to Expect: Root Canal Treatment

Did you know that over 15 million root canals are performed each year? Even though this is a dental procedure that gets a bad rap, properly performed root canal treatments should not be painful! At brush365, we want you to feel cared for and cozy. A root canal treatment should feel similar to receiving a routine filling.

What is a Root Canal?

A root canal treatment, a type of endodontic treatment, is when the pulp is removed from the inside of the tooth and the inner chambers of the roots. The dental pulp is the inner soft connective tissue part of the tooth that contains the tooth's nerves, blood vessels, and blood supply. This area is cleaned and debrided using a series of medicaments and then filled with a restorative material.

After the treatment, most patients also need to have a crown placed over the tooth to strengthen it. Once the pulp is removed, teeth are likely to become brittle. A crown allows for your investment in saving your tooth to be more secure!

Reasons You May Need A Root Canal Treatment

The most common reason most people need a root canal is because they are experiencing pain in the tooth, which can become excruciating. Did you know that the pulp of your teeth houses the most densely packed nerves in the body? So when your pulp is inflamed... it HURTS!

When the pulp becomes infected—usually because of deep decay—it causes a painful toothache. An abscess may form and if left untreated, the bacteria from the infected tooth can spread to other parts of the body. This can cause serious illness and even death which is why seeking root canal therapy for a toothache is important. A root canal also helps save your natural tooth from being extracted. A missing tooth causes surrounding teeth to shift out of place and may require a dental implant or bridge to replace it. When fully restored, a tooth that was treated with a root canal can stay in place and continue to function as it did before.

A cavity isn't the only reason you may need a root canal. A cracked or broken tooth can expose the nerve, causing pain as well. Or a tooth can "die" if it's been injured, which can happen when people play sports or have trauma from falling or even a car accident.

Sometimes a tooth that has received repeated fillings or dental work eventually needs a root canal if a filling is required too close to the pulp. Having a root canal will relieve a toothache and remove inflammation and infection from the mouth before it can do any more damage.

The Root Canal Procedure

A general dentist can perform root canals. However, if a root canal appears complicated or out of our scope, we may refer you to a specialist (an endodontist). A root canal treatment begins with taking the necessary x-rays to confirm the affected tooth can be treated effectively. Next, your dentist will administer a local numbing agent to the area to ensure that you don't feel any pain or discomfort.

The reason many people fear having a root canal treatment is because they are usually already in pain when they need one! We will do everything we can to make sure you are comfortable and offer anti-anxiety options to help you relax during the procedure.

Once the area is numb, you may have a dental dam placed over your mouth. This isolates the tooth that needs the root canal and prevents any debris from entering your mouth. The dentist will drill away the decay and remove the inside of the tooth that contains the pulp. They'll then use special files that scrub away anything inside the root of the tooth.

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After they confirm that all of the infected areas have been thoroughly removed, they'll disinfect the inside of the tooth nerve canals and begin to fill it up with a gutta percha, a natural latex.. A harder composite will be used to fill the crown portion of the tooth (otherwise known as a tooth "build up")

What to Expect Post Procedure

As the numbing anesthetic wears off, you may still experience some soreness or pain, but this will begin to fade away. You may be prescribed an antibiotic by your dentist to help clear up any remaining bacteria and swelling. You may also be given a prescription painkiller, or you can take over-the-counter pain medicine for any discomfort.

For the first few days you may find it more comfortable to chew on the opposite side of your mouth or eat softer foods. You should continue to brush and floss your teeth as usual.

Do I need A Crown After a Root Canal Treatment?

Oftentimes after a root canal treatment is performed, the tooth will require a dental crown to cover and protect it. At brush365 we offer convenient same day crowns and can usually do your root canal and crown in one visit. If your dentist at brush365 advises that you wait, we can get you scheduled to allow the tooth to heal prior to making the crown. The crown allows your tooth to stay strong for chewing food and it also prevents further breakage.

Going Forward

After receiving a root canal and crown, your natural tooth can last for the remainder of your life with proper care. You should continue to practice good at-home oral care that includes brushing twice daily, flossing once a day, and limiting sweet and sticky foods in your diet. However, even with the best home care, root canal treated teeth may get reinfected and need to be retreated with another root canal or a new crown depending on the severity of the issue. Regular checkups with your dentist will allow us to detect the health of the tooth.

Just as important is seeing your dentist at brush365 every six months for a check-up and cleaning. Your dentist can detect any small cavities, cracks, or other problems and repair them before they get larger and can cause you pain. Routine dental check-ups are vital to help prevent toothaches from developing and the need for future root canals.