

# ROOT CANAL THERAPY (ENDODONTICS)

## TO YOUR HEALTH - PATIENT EDUCATION HANDOUT

### WHY A ROOT CANAL?

Teeth that have large areas of decay or a loss of vitality are potential sites of infection. An infection can start inside the pulp of the tooth where tiny blood vessels and nerves are located. When the pulp becomes diseased it must be removed completely or the infection may spread to surrounding areas. If the tooth is restorable, root canal therapy or endodontics can be performed and the valuable tooth saved. This procedure removes the pulp and bacteria, shapes the canals within the tooth's root, and helps to seal the tooth from future infection.

The only other alternative to treating a diseased pulp is to extract the tooth. Missing teeth can create even more problems. Once a tooth has been removed, the support it offered other teeth is lost. This can result in drifting teeth, an unbalanced bite, increased cavities and gum disease, as well as, additional tooth loss. That's why teeth that have lost bone support to such a degree that they must be removed should be replaced even if other people can't see the space.

### HOW DO YOU KNOW IF YOU NEED A ROOT CANAL?

Generally there are some definite symptoms that indicate a root canal may be needed. They are:

- A tooth that constantly aches or throbs.
- Prolonged sensitivity to hot and cold.
- Pain upon chewing or touching the tooth.
- An increase of pain or pressure at night: the pain will keep you awake or awaken you from sleep.
- Swelling in the jaw or cheek in the area of a dying tooth.
- There may be a bump or pimple on the gums above or below the tooth.
- Radiographic evidence of an infection or abscess of the tooth.

### DOES ROOT CANAL THERAPY HURT?

Some patients may experience mild discomfort during the initial appointment of a root canal. However, this procedure is made relatively painless through the use of local anesthesia. The discomfort, if any, will be brief and certainly less than the "toothache".

Until the root canal is completed and all surrounding tissues heal, the tooth will be somewhat tender. The dentist may prescribe antibiotics and/or pain medication if needed. These are to be taken according to the medication directions given to you.

### HOW MANY APPOINTMENTS AND AT WHAT COST IS ROOT CANAL THERAPY AT THE STUDENT EMERGENCY DENTAL SERVICE?

You may need the first appointment of root canal therapy to relieve your pain. This appointment is considered emergency dental care, and there is NO additional charge to get you out of PAIN. Follow-up care is crucial in determining the success of your root canal. It must be completed or the infection and pain may return compromising any chance of saving the tooth.

If you desire SDS to complete your root canal therapy, there will be a CHARGE. Root canal procedures usually take two to three appointments to complete. The first appointment is to remove nerve tissue and determine the length of the tooth's root. The second appointment is to prepare the root canals for the filling material. The last appointment is to place the filling material into the canals. Included in your root canal therapy will be several x-rays to insure the exactness of the fill. Ask our staff about the charge for your particular situation. Back teeth cost a little more than front teeth because the canals are more numerous and number of appointments greater.

**NOTE:** You may expect some persistent soreness after each appointment that may last several days, until the root canal therapy is complete.

### WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THE ROOT CANAL IS COMPLETED?

Once the root canal is completed, you need to have the coronal or top portion of the tooth restored. A post retained build-up is advised to replace missing tooth structure due to decay and endodontic access. The post aids in retention of the filling and strengthens the tooth down into the root. A major concern is that the tooth may become brittle due to loss of vitality, and this will make it prone to fracture and possible loss of the tooth. Since crowns support the coronal portion of a tooth, they are often recommended as the final restoration for the endodontically treated tooth.

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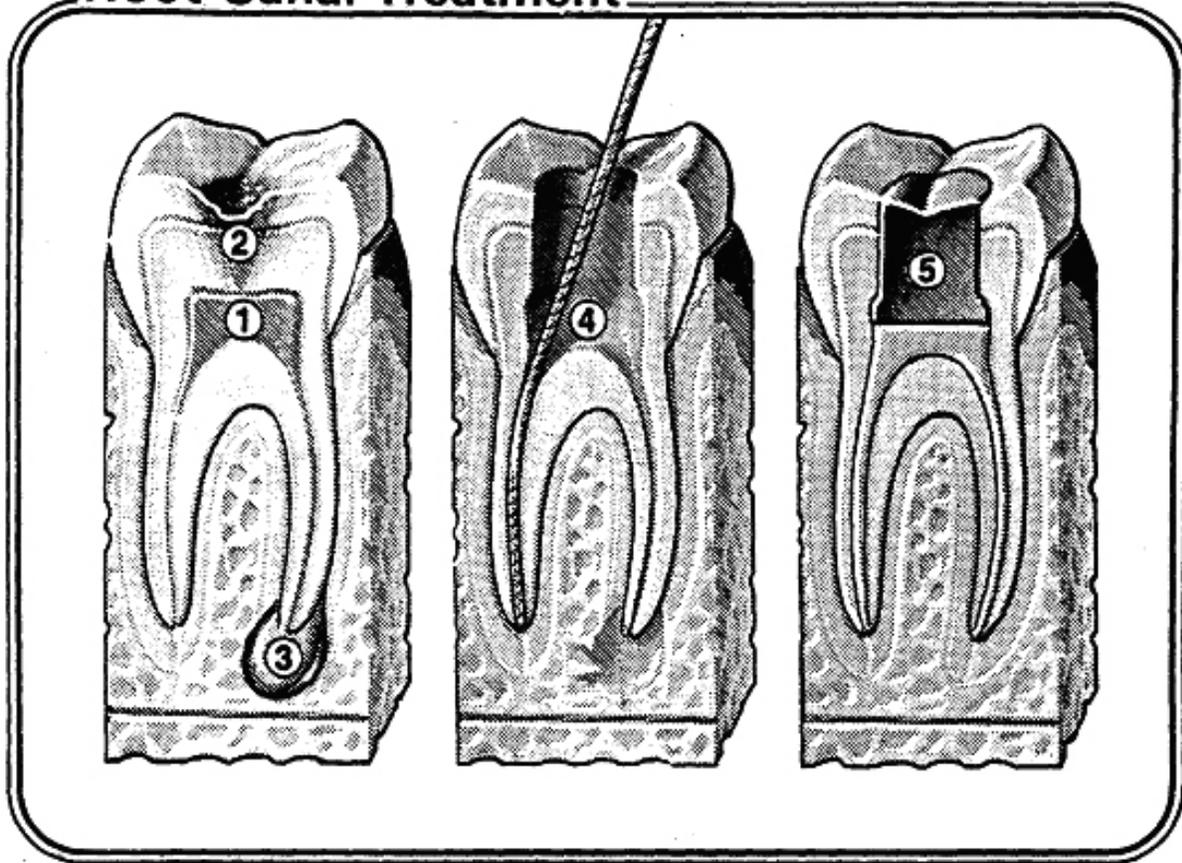
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### Root Canal Treatment



A tooth receives nutrition from the pulp (1). The pulp is encased in the middle of the tooth and contains a blood supply and nerve network. If the pulp is damaged in any way (2), it may become infected and form an abscess (3). Root canal treatment may be recommended in this situation. Untreated, such a condition could lead to loss of the tooth and a serious infection.

A series of appointments is usually required for root canal treatment. At the first appointment, the diseased pulp tissue must be completely removed (4). The tooth is cleaned out to eliminate the infectious causing bacteria. At a subsequent appointment, the canal is completely filled and sealed (5). This is done only after the canal is completely free of bacteria. In many cases, root canal treatment is less costly than replacement with an artificial tooth. Proper home care of your teeth, along with dental checkups, may prevent a situation that requires root canal treatment.

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