



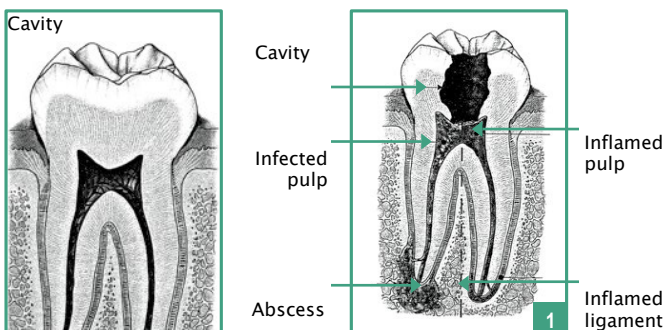
Root Canal

INFORMATION SHEET

Root canal

A root canal procedure is done to remove inflamed or infected pulp.

Dental pulp is the soft tissue inside the tooth and is made up of nerves and blood vessels. Pulp may become infected due to a blow to the face, a deep cavity or repeated fillings. Signs of pulp disease include sudden or prolonged toothache when biting food or contact with hot/cold liquids, discolouring of the tooth, gum or jaw swelling/discomfort, or a fractured tooth (Fig. 1).



HEALTHY TOOTH

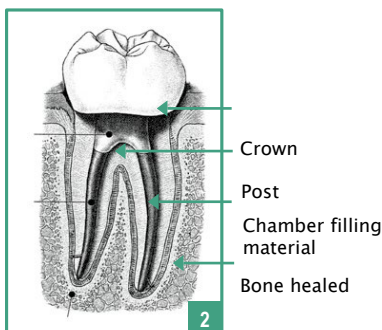
INFECTION - INFLAMMATION

What does the treatment involve?

The dentist starts with an examination to assess whether a root canal is required. One or more appointments are needed for the treatment, depending how many roots there are in the tooth to be treated and the level of infection.

After giving a local anesthetic, the dentist first makes an opening at the crown of the tooth to reach the damaged pulp and remove it. The dentist cleans and disinfects the canal, then fills and seals it with plastic filling material. The opening is repaired with a crown or other restoration.

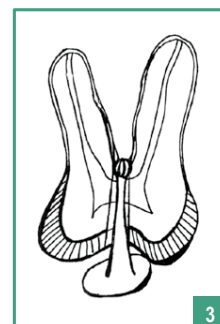
That final step protects the tooth and restores its normal function (Fig. 2).



What are the risks and complications of root canal?

Risks related to access

- Damage to an existing dental restoration. When a dentist has to perform root canal treatment on a tooth with a crown or other restoration, that restoration (or crown) may get so damaged that it needs to be replaced, repaired or reattached.
- Perforation when preparing the access cavity (Fig. 3).
- Tooth fracture. Caution is required because the tooth may fracture between treatments performed by the dentist due to the pressure from chewing.
- Canal not detected. Unintentionally, some canals may not be mechanically prepared, cleaned, disinfected, or filled. That can lead to post-operative complications in the medium/long term (sensitivity, pain or infection). If this happens, the dentist may recommend other treatments to correct the situation.



Risks related to instruments

- Perforated root.
- Instrument breaks in the canal. Since some endodontic instruments are fragile and the canals in most teeth are very narrow, an instrument may break inside one of the tooth canals during treatment. This may impact the prognosis of the root canal treatment.
- Blocked canal. This happens when debris forms a solid mass in the canal or when fibrous pulp tissue is compacted against the walls of the canal.

Complications related to the filling

- Inadequate filling of the canal(s).

Other complications

- Pain. After a root canal treatment appointment, there may be some pain when there is contact with the tooth; the dentist will prescribe painkillers and the pain will gradually go away after 72 hours.
- Swelling. If the tooth was infected prior to treatment, there may be some swelling. If necessary, an appropriate antibiotic will be prescribed.

If infection persists, the following are possible interventions:

- Root canal retreatment.
- Apical surgery with retrograde filling.
- Tooth extraction with a prosthodontic replacement in the empty space.

What factors complicate root canal treatment?

- Curves
- Blockages, calcification
- Difficult access
- Accessory canals
- Double canals
- Resorption
- Infection or other related damage
- Patient's medical condition
- Other factors

I gave this information sheet to patient (name): _____

Date: _____

Dentist's signature: _____