

## What is a root canal?

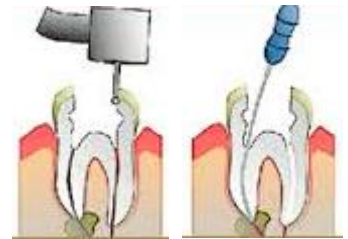
A root canal is a dental treatment. It is done to try to save a tooth. It is often done to relieve tooth pain or infection and to keep the tooth from being pulled (extracted).

## How is it done?

- A medicine to numb the area is injected in the mouth. This is called an anesthetic.
- The inside of the tooth nerve chamber is cleaned and disinfected (1).
- A filling material is put in the cleaned area (2).
- A temporary filling is put over the opening of the tooth.
- A more permanent type of filling such as a crown or cap must be done at a later date (3). This is done to protect the tooth from breaking or getting infected again.

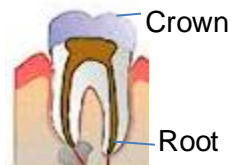


Unhealthy tooth



1

2



3

## What are the risks during and after?

There is no guarantee that the root canal will work. With root canals, the risks include, but are not limited to:

- Loss of tooth structure or weakening of the tooth.
- A large amount of decay that may prevent the tooth from being fixed.
- Crown or root fractures that are found during treatment.
- Accidental openings of the crown or root of the tooth. These are called perforations.
- Blocked canals that may prevent successful treatment.
- Root canal filling material may go beyond the end of the root.
- The possibility of a broken instrument in the tooth.
- The root canal might not save the tooth. It may still need to be pulled in the future. This would depend on how infected the tooth is and other problems.
- Pain, swelling, and/or infection after treatment.
- Jaw joint problems. This is often called TMJ.
- Reactions to medicines, anesthetics or chemicals.
- Numbness. This could be temporary or permanent.

## Are there other options?

- Delay or have no treatment. If you choose this option you risk more pain, infection and loss of the tooth, or teeth.
- Extraction. Pulling the tooth and replacing with either nothing, a partial, a bridge, or implant.

## What else do I need to know?

After the root canal, more dental work will need to be done. Most often this means a cap or crown will be put on the tooth. If it is not done, the root canal may fail or the tooth may break. The cap or crown should be put on within 30 days of having the root canal.

## Pain

- You may have some pain, or the area may be sensitive after the root canal. This can last a few hours to several days. The dentist will tell you what to use for pain relief.
- You may have swelling of the gum tissues or face. The dentist may prescribe antibiotics to prevent infections.
- It may be hard or painful to open and close your mouth for a day or two. This is from your mouth being open so long during the root canal.

## Mouth care

- Do not eat anything until the numbness wears off. This will keep you from biting your cheek or your tongue.
- Do not chew or bite on the root canal treated tooth until the permanent crown or cap is put on.
- Be sure to brush and floss as normal.

## Other

- The dentists in our clinic specialize in child dentistry. They do many root canals, but are not root canal specialists. You can be referred to a specialist if you want.

**ALERT:** Call your child's dentist or clinic if you have any concerns or if:

- There is swelling inside or outside your child's mouth.
- There have an allergic reaction to medicine. This includes a rash, hives or itching. Nausea **is not** an allergic reaction.
- The original symptoms such as pain or pressure come back.
- Your child's bite feels uneven.
- You think the entire filling has come out. **Note:** If a temporary filling material was used in the tooth, it is not uncommon for a thin layer to wear off between appointments.
- Your child has special health care needs not covered by this information.

**For other health and wellness information, check out this resource:**

<https://kidshealth.org/ChildrensWi/en/parents>

**This document was created to help you care for your child or family member. It does not take the place of medical care. Talk with your healthcare provider for diagnosis, treatment and follow-up.**