

Root Canal Information Sheet

Reason for Root Canal Treatment:

Root canal treatment is indicated usually in the following situations:

- infection
- irreversible damage to the nerve inside the tooth
- cracked tooth with associated symptoms
- exposure of the nerve
- decay into the nerve
- rarely, elective root canal treatment for other reasons

Aims of root canal treatment:

- gain access to the nerve(s) inside the tooth
- identify the number of nerves inside that tooth- teeth further back in the mouth are more likely to have several nerves
- remove the nerve and shape the canal where it use to lie
- shaping is carried out to allow disinfectant solution to flush out bacteria
- fill the canals
- restore the tooth to function

Things you should know before embarking on root canal treatment - root canal treatment is NOT always successful. Treatment can be complicated by:

- difficult anatomy of the tooth e.g. Canals which are tight or curved
- perforation of root or tooth whilst searching for canals, which may reduce the prognosis of the tooth. In the long term the tooth may need extraction in this case if not repairable.

- separation/fracture of instruments inside canals
- blockages inside the canal or ledges which can't be overcome
- disinfection solution going beyond the end of the canal resulting in swelling or tenderness in the surrounding tissues
- limited or poor access e.g. teeth at the back of the mouth
- difficult final restoration of the tooth
- teeth affected by gum disease

Alternative treatments to consider:

- no treatment- this may result in pain, infection or swelling and may reduce the likelihood of success of future treatment
- Extraction- this results in a gap that may need replacement. This may in turn affect the position of neighboring or opposing teeth. You should also consider the surgical risks involved.

Following completion of the root canal treatment, the tooth may require further treatment in the form of a crown or onlay. This can either be metal or tooth coloured.

Please note this information sheet is not exhaustive, it is essential to discuss the above information in more detail with your dentist before commencing treatment and ask any questions you need answered.