

What is Root Canal Treatment?

The Root Canal system of the tooth extends from the crown (middle of the tooth crown) to the tip of the root (bottom of the tooth) and contains the pulp. Pulp is the soft tissue at the centre of the tooth which is composed of blood vessels and nervous tissue. When the pulp of a tooth is damaged, infected or inflamed a Root Canal Treatment is needed to save the tooth. The treatment involves removal of the pulp and sealing of the root canal system. A crown is then required 3 months after the completion of the Root Canal to provide support to the weakened tooth.

When is a Root Canal required?

If any of the following symptoms occur, you may require Root Canal Treatment .

1. Pain when eating or drinking hot or cold food or drinks, especially hot.
2. Pain when biting or chewing.
3. A loose tooth.
4. Swelling or pimple on the gum next to a tooth.
5. Facial swelling.
6. Tooth suddenly becomes dark in colour
7. A large cavity caused by dental decay.

However, the pulp of the tooth may sometimes die without causing noticeable pain. An x-ray of your tooth may show the cause of pain or infection. Antibiotics are not effective in treating root canal infections. The two treatment options are a root canal treatment or extraction of the tooth.

What are the benefits of Root Canal Treatment

Saving your tooth with a root canal treatment has the benefits of:

1. A better bite and more efficient chewing
2. Keeping your natural teeth
3. Protecting your other teeth from wear and tear and possible movement

What happens during a Root Canal Treatment?

Once your dentist has confirmed a root canal is needed via an x-ray, the following procedure is completed over 2 or 3 appointments (length of appointments vary depending on which tooth requires treatment)

1. The tooth and the gum will be numbed with local anaesthetic
2. The mouth will be covered with a rubber sheet (rubber dam) which exposes and isolates only the tooth to be treated.
3. If any, decay will be removed from the tooth
4. The dentist will gain access to the pulp chamber through the top part of the tooth (depending on which tooth). The pulp is removed using thin hand held and rotary metal files. The root canal system is thoroughly cleaned and dried before being sealed.
5. The tooth is then restored with a white composite filling.
6. After the tooth has completely healed and has been pain free for 3 months, a ceramic crown is placed over the entire biting surface of the tooth to protect the tooth from fracture.

What are the risks and complications of a Root Canal Treatment?

In most cases, root canal treatment is successful and the tooth will no longer cause pain. However, there is always some risk depending on the condition of the tooth, how well you keep your teeth clean and the biting forces on the tooth

Common risks and complications include:

1. Post treatment mild temporary pain due to inflammation of the tissues surrounding the tooth. This can last several hours to several days, if required medication can be prescribed.
2. Post treatment swelling of the gum or face that may last several hours to several days
3. Trismus (restriction of jaw opening)
4. The tooth becoming dark : there are certain procedures available which may lighten the tooth if this occurs
5. Tooth fracture due to reduced strength and durability of the tooth and also delay of crown placement. This risk is reduced when a crown is placed. If tooth fracture occurs, the only option may be tooth extraction. If fracture of the tooth occurs 3 months after the completion of the Root Canal, and there is no appointment booked for a crown, a fee may incur for the treatment required.

Uncommon risks and complications include

1. The fine metal files used to clean inside the canals may break during the procedure and become lodged in the tooth, if this occurs the tooth may need to be removed or a referral to be written to an Endodontist who may be able to remove the broken file and/or complete the Root Canal Treatment. This will come with additional costs.
2. Depending on the size and shape of the roots, there is some risk of creating a hole in the side of the tooth root during the cleaning procedure, if this occurs the tooth often needs to be extracted but sometimes it can be repaired. Again a referral to a specialist may be required.
3. You still experience severe or persistent pain after the completion of the Root Canal Treatment- Please return to the treating dental practitioner if this occurs to discuss options
4. Recurrent infection of the tooth
5. Failure of the Root Canal Treatment- if this occurs the tooth may need to be removed or a referral to be written to an Endodontist who may be able to re-treat the already Root Canaled Tooth

I understand that the tooth may be weakened following the root canal treatment and will need to be supported by the placement of a ceramic crown over the tooth 3 months after the completion. I also understand that i may be advised to return for a follow-up x-ray to ensure that proper healing is taking place, and that failure to do so may result in loss of the tooth due to recurrent infection

In signing this form, I acknowledge that I have been given the full opportunity to ask any and all questions I might have about the treatment I am to receive at Clarity Dental Care. I agree that I have read and understand all the information supplied to me in regards to the treatment

Patient/Guardian _____ Date: _____