



Root Canal Post Operative Instructions

The purpose of the root canal treatment is to remove diseased tissue from inside of the root and seal the root end. Depending on each case, endodontic treatment may be completed in one, two or three appointments. Once started, it is important to complete the root canal therapy.

After your root canal therapy has been completed:

Your endodontic, or root canal, therapy will usually maintain your tooth and relieve the pain you may have been experiencing. Please avoid biting on the tooth for the next few days. It is not unusual for the tooth to be tender after a root canal, and healing occurs more quickly if you do not chew on it immediately.

Also, avoid biting your lip, cheek, and tongue while anesthetized (numb) since this may cause damage to them.

Will I have discomfort after the treatment?

If your tooth was in pain prior to starting the treatment, it will take up to a week or more for the tooth get back to normal. Give the therapy a chance to work.

If your tooth was not in pain prior to beginning treatment (likely because the tooth was abscessed or had a deep cavity that had not begun to hurt yet), your tooth may be quite sore for a few days after the appointment. This will be alleviated with time; it may take as much as a week or more.

Should you have pain that you cannot tolerate, abnormal swelling, fever, or significant pain, please call our office. We will suggest medication or other steps to make you more comfortable.

Will I need pain medication?

Over the counter analgesics such as aspirin, Acetaminophen (Tylenol™), Ibuprofen (Advil™, Motrin™), Naproxen sodium (Aleve™) products usually alleviate the discomfort. Take pain relievers before the anesthetic wears off and continue taking for two or three days as directed. Following this recommendation may substantially decrease your after treatment discomfort. We recommend taking an anti-inflammatory such as Ibuprofen. Take 600mg (3 x 200mg) over the counter Advil™ or Motrin™ four times per day for two to four days, IF YOU HAVE NO KNOWN ALLERGIES TO THESE MEDS.

You may be given a prescription for a narcotic medication if we feel it will be necessary. Narcotic medications should never be taken in combination with alcohol, histamine blockers (antihistamines), tranquilizers, muscle relaxants, or any other agent that depresses the central nervous system. Narcotics increase the effects of these medications on the brain, and overdose can result from their combined use.

Remember that you must NOT drive a car or engage in any type of activity requiring mental alertness while taking narcotic or sedative-type medications.

What if I had swelling when I came to the office?

The area may be tender for several days while it heals. If the swelling does not reduce after several days or increases, please call our office.

Do I need antibiotics?

In most cases, antibiotics are not required after endodontic therapy. You will be given a prescription for antibiotics if we feel it will be necessary. Some medical conditions require a special antibiotic prophylaxis regimen taken prior to the appointment to help prevent damage to certain structures.

How should I take care of my tooth?

You may continue regular dental hygiene regimen. Avoid biting or chewing on the tooth during the first few days. Avoid sticky foods like caramel, jellybeans, or gum since they may loosen or remove the temporary filling, which was placed. If the temporary filling feels loose or completely falls out, please call our office. It may need to be replaced.

Do I need to return for a final restoration?

A permanent restoration is necessary after having a root canal and may require additional appointments. We usually place a temporary in the tooth, so it is important that you schedule promptly for a permanent restoration because the temporary filling will eventually allow bacteria to leak in and contaminate the tooth. Failure to complete the final restoration in a timely manner may result in the need for re-treatment of the root canal(s) in your tooth at an additional cost or possibly severe pain and infection or loss of the tooth due to fracture of the tooth and/or recontamination from leakage.

How long will my tooth last?

With proper care, your restored tooth can last a lifetime if healing is adequate. Teeth treated with endodontic therapy can still decay. As with other teeth, proper dental care requires regular brushing and flossing, a nutritious diet and regular dental visits.

Will I need to return for additional treatments?

Once endodontic therapy is completed your tooth may require periodic examination, usually 6-12 months. This allows us to make sure the tooth has is healing properly. Please call our office if your tooth feels unusual or discomfort persists after completion.

Fortunately, most root canals heal with about a 90% success rate. Sometimes despite our best efforts, a small percentage of patients may need to have the root canal(s) retreated or will need root-end surgery (surgically clean the bone that surrounds the root tip and seal the tip of the root) to achieve adequate healing.