

## ENDODONTIC INFORMATION

### **What is endodontics?**

The soft tissue in the centre of a tooth that contains the nerves, blood vessels and connective tissue is called the pulp. Endodontics or root canal treatment is treatment carried out to either maintain the health of the pulp or remove it to prevent or treat infection - commonly termed, an abscess.

### **Why do I need treatment?**

If the pulp in your tooth is not healthy, either because it is inflamed, infected or has died, it needs to be removed, the space cleaned, then filled and finally the tooth can be restored. Sometimes, if a tooth is very broken down, root canal treatment is required to gain space in order to build the tooth back up again - think of it as the 'foundation' for the crown. On occasions, a post may be used to do this.

A post is part of the filling that extends in to the root canal on top of which a crown can be placed.

### **What do you do when I have the treatment?**

Local anaesthetic is used to numb the area. A barrier or rubber dam is placed around the tooth to isolate it from the rest of the mouth. This prevents instruments and materials falling in to your mouth or airway and also prevents bacteria naturally present in your mouth, from entering the tooth. To get to the root canals, a small hole is made in the crown of your tooth through which the root canals are cleaned and filled. This is initially carried out using instruments that you will have experienced if you have had a regular filling before. Fine files are then used to reshape the inside of your tooth.

### **How many appointments do I need?**

After the initial consultation appointment, the treatment typically takes one or two, 90-minute appointments.

### **Why does it take so long?**

Root canal treatment can be extremely technically demanding (fiddly). It therefore takes time, patience and good technical skills to do the work thoroughly, that's where the time is spent.

### **Will I get a personal service?**

Each tooth is different. Your treatment will be discussed and only carried out if you agree (consent). You will receive an individual, itemised treatment plan including fees for all treatments.

### **I've had it before, does that matter and why do I need it again?**

Root canal treatment, as a general rule, has the best chance of success when done well the first time. If you are having it done again, it really depends on why. Below are some examples of why you might need root canal treatment again (root canal retreatment).

- Leakage of bacteria from the crown of the tooth such as if the crown or the filling in the tooth has come out.
- The previous root canal treatment could be technically improved.
- Something was broken in the tooth before and it needs to be removed.

### **I really like my crown, can it be left in place or does it have to be replaced?**

Normally root canal treatment can be carried out through the crown of the tooth. If there is a filling or a crown already in place, it may be leaking which has resulted in the root canal treatment being required. It is better in these cases to remove the crown or filling, carry out the root canal treatment and have a new one placed by your dentist. An added advantage of removing the filling or crown is the tooth underneath can be inspected closely for cracks or decay and it also confirms that your dentist will be able to restore (rebuild) the tooth afterwards.

If the crown or filling is to be left in place, a hole is either made through it (as if it wasn't there) or surgery is carried out whereby the crown is not touched and access is gained to the root of the tooth by lifting the gum up in a surgical procedure and the infection accessed directly that way.

### **Will the treatment hurt?**

All treatment will be carried out under local anaesthetic so there should be no reason that the treatment should hurt.

### **After I've had treatment, will it hurt?**

Sometimes discomfort may be felt after each appointment. This is because we are generally dealing with already inflamed tissue and by carrying out the treatment; we are stirring things up further. As a general rule, you are more likely to have pain after the appointment if you had pain before the appointment. Rather than causing discomfort, root canal treatment often treats or prevents pain occurring.

### **What medication do I need?**

If you need something for discomfort afterwards, whatever you take for a headache such as ibuprofen or paracetamol tends to work well. Antibiotics are only very rarely required as we only need to allow time for the body to manage the inflammation.

### **If it's just an infection, why can't I take antibiotics to make it better?**

Rather than thinking of the root canals as tubes within the tooth, think of them more like trees in autumn, without the leaves. There are lots of little branches and 'hiding places' for the bacteria within the root. Unlike say a chest infection, where the bacteria are within reach of circulating blood and antibiotics within it, the areas in a tooth where the bacteria are, are not exposed to the circulation. During times of acute infection, where the bacteria 'spill out' in to the tissues beyond the root, antibiotics can have some benefit in the short term, however, the long term solution is to get rid of the source of the infection i.e. the bacteria within the tooth, by carrying out root canal treatment or indeed an extraction.

### **Will I need any more treatment in the future?**

Your treatment includes at least one follow-up appointment 6-12 months after the initial treatment is complete to ensure the treatment is working. If further appointments are required this will be explained.

### **Who will do any further treatment if it is required?**

Further root canal treatment, if required, will be carried out by us but normally once the root canal treatment is complete, the tooth should be restored as soon as possible.

### **How much will it cost?**

An itemised bill will be provided for you depending on what is required but you can see our fee structure using the tab at the top of the page.

## **Will it work?**

Root canal treatment has the highest success when there is no infection for example after trauma. Success rates are well in excess of 90% in these cases. In the presence of infection, such as after an abscess, success rates generally reduce. This reduces further if the root canal treatment is being carried out for the second time but it will depend specifically on why the root canal treatment is required.

## **What are the alternatives?**

Once the pulp of the tooth is damaged, there are only 2 options. Root canal treatment or an extraction. Either could be considered the 'right thing' depending on how keen you are to save your teeth. An extraction is usually relatively quick and simple. You are then left with a gap which may or may not be acceptable. The gap does not necessarily need to be filled, but if you choose to do so, you could have a denture, a bridge or an implant. Speak to your dentist about your specific options.

## **What happens if the root canal treatment doesn't work?**

If it doesn't work, you still have the option of an extraction, you could have the root canal treatment redone in a similar way to the first time or an alternative is called apical surgery.

## **Why can't my dentist do it/ why do I need to be referred?**

As a general rule, root canal treatment is demanding and time-consuming. The most efficient way of managing the process is by asking someone who does it all day, every day to do it. That's where the referral comes in.

## **I've had the treatment, but my tooth still hurts. Why?**

There are several reasons your tooth might be sore after the treatment. Most commonly, it's because the tissue around the tooth is inflamed and the body needs time to sort it out, just like a bruise, it will get better on its own. This pain will get better after a couple of days but pain killers in the meantime such as those you take for a headache will help. The body has remarkable healing potential. The tooth is no different. Despite the presence of bacteria or inflammation, once the balance is shifted in favour of the body, healing should occur and that's the aim of the treatment! Because the inside of the tooth has been cored-out, the tooth is structurally weaker. This is the reason you should have the crown restored as soon as possible by your dentist who referred you.

### **What if I have more questions?**

Feel free to ask any question at any time either by email, telephone or in person  
[mail@bourneendental.co.uk](mailto:mail@bourneendental.co.uk)

Due to the high demand for appointments with our endodontic specialist, coupled with the duration of the appointments, we require a minimum of 48 hours notice of any cancellations or regrettably we reserve the right to levy 25% of the proposed treatment costs should we be unable to re-fill the appointment.