

Endodontic Treatment

Endodontic treatment (root canal treatment) may become necessary when the pulp is inflamed or infected (*figure 1*). If you are experiencing symptoms such as pain from hot or cold foods or drinks, pain on chewing, throbbing, aching or shooting pain or have a swelling in the area around a tooth or teeth then endodontic treatment is likely to resolve your symptoms providing they are of tooth-related origin.

The information in this fact sheet will introduce you to treatment options available and help you understand how they are performed and what you will need to do in the event you undergo one of these procedures.

The Root Canal Treatment Procedure

Endodontic treatment is usually completed in one to three appointments, depending on the extent of infection and your current stage of oral and general health. A standard procedure involves the following steps:

1. Treatment is usually performed under local anaesthesia. To keep your tooth clean and to control the operating environment, a rubber dam is used at all times during treatment. This prevents saliva, water or the liquids used from getting into your mouth and recontaminating the root canal system.
2. A small opening is made in the crown of the tooth to allow access to the root canal system. Very small instruments are used to clean the inflamed or infected pulp from the root canal system and to shape the space for filling. The root canal system is cleaned, shaped and disinfected to remove bacteria and any remaining pulpal tissue. This is critical to remove the cause of the disease and resolve your symptoms. (*figure 2*)

3. In most cases, the tooth will require medication, which is sealed into the root canals and a temporary restoration is placed. The length of time your tooth needs to be medicated will vary according to your individual situation. Your treatment is not yet completed and it is critical for you to return even though the tooth may be completely comfortable. (*figure 3*)
4. After the root canal space is cleaned and shaped, it will be filled with a root filling material called gutta-percha and an adhesive sealer cement. The aim is to completely fill the root canals and prevent re-infection. In most cases a temporary filling is placed to close the access opening. (*figure 4*)
5. After your endodontic treatment has been completed, it is important for you to schedule an appointment with your dentist so you can have the tooth restored permanently as soon as possible. Your tooth will need to be protected with a final restoration such as an onlay or crown to preserve the structural integrity of your tooth.
6. We need to see you at a later stage to review your body's response to treatment. Even though you may be feeling great and have no concerns at all, the follow up review is a very important part of your treatment and we strongly encourage you to attend this appointment. Healing of the jawbone can be slow and it is important to have a regular check up and radiograph (x-ray) so that this bone healing is assessed.

figure 1

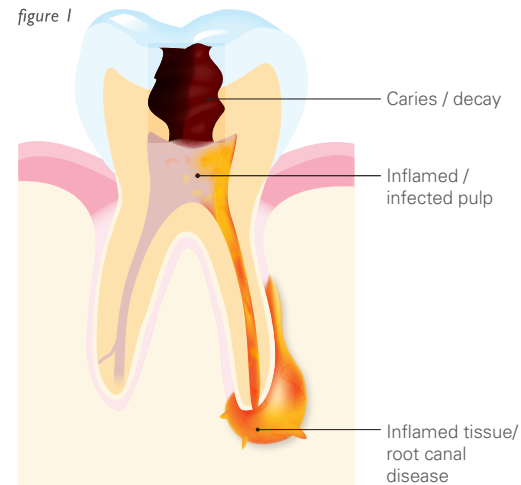
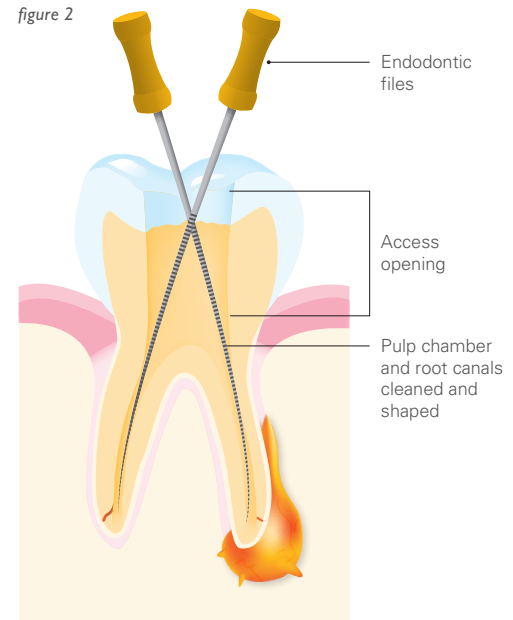


figure 2



Restorations

A crown is often the ideal restorative option following root canal therapy, especially when a large amount of your natural tooth structure has been lost. Crowns serve a dual purpose. Firstly, crowns reinforce and support the remaining tooth structure, so as to prevent the generation or continued extension of cracks. Think of a crown like a “hard hat” to protect your tooth. Secondly, crowns can be an aesthetic option to replace missing tooth structure.

In certain cases, a tooth may lack sufficient structure for a crown to be placed. In such cases, a post may be necessary for additional support. (figure 5)

If only a minimal amount of your tooth is missing, a conventional filling may be all that is required to restore your tooth to its natural appearance and function. Your dentist will advise you of the best option for your tooth following an assessment of your treatment records and x-rays.

Internal Bleaching

Teeth may discolour as a result of infection of the pulp, a traumatic accident, or a leaking filling. A bleaching agent may be applied inside the crown of a front tooth after root canal treatment to improve the colour. Depending on the degree of colour change, this may take one or several appointments. This procedure can only be used effectively if most of the natural tooth structure remains. If a significant portion of the tooth structure has been lost, then a crown may be necessary to restore aesthetics, thereby removing the need for internal bleaching.

figure 3

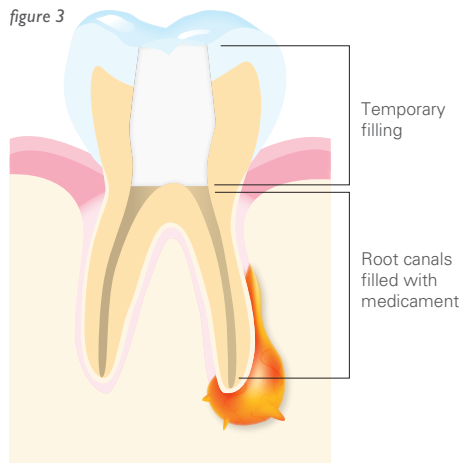


figure 4

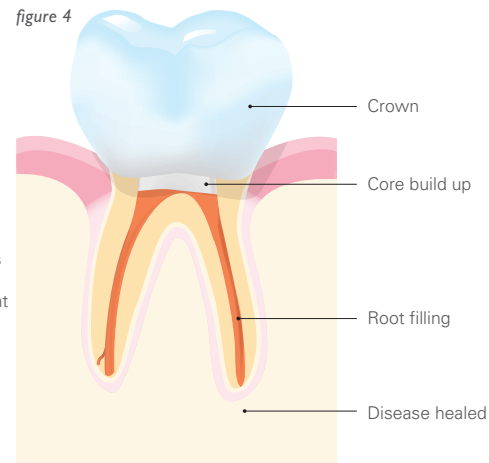
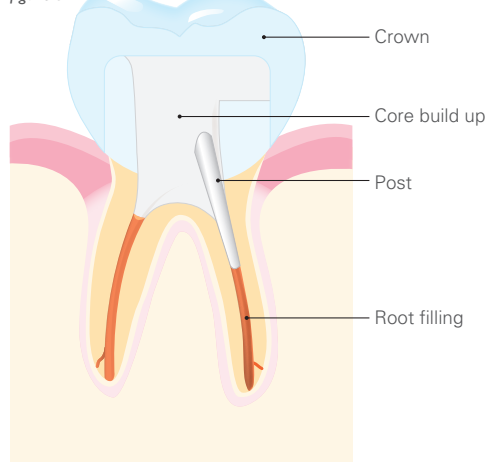


figure 5



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