Beginning in 1995, more teeth were saved by root canals than were extracted. Over 90% of teeth treated this way will last as long as the adjacent untreated teeth. Extensive disease in the tooth and bone reduces the chance of success.

**HOW DOES ROOT CANAL TREATMENT WORK?**

Today, if the tooth is extremely painful, I will relieve the pain either by making an opening to let the infection drain, or use medications.

At your next appointment, I will clean out the canals and seal them. I’ll try to complete the root canal in one appointment. If this isn’t possible, I may need a series of appointments over several weeks.

Two days before this appointment, you should begin taking Medrol. This medication will reduce the soreness of the teeth. Your body’s normal inflammatory healing process will usually cause slight soreness for 2 days after this appointment. If you have more discomfort, please call me either at the office or at home. Normally I can control any pain within a few hours.

If your face is swollen or the tooth has been painful, I may leave the tooth open to allow it to drain and reduce the pain. Please chew on the other side to avoid packing food in the opening.

Please plan to return in 6-12 months so I can take an x-ray and re-evaluate the tooth.

**Frequently asked Questions**

**Do root canal teeth usually turn black?**

No, they sometimes darken, but even then, they usually can be bleached lighter.

**Do root canals hurt as bad as some people say?**

The actual appointment is almost never painful. If it is, I’ll stop and we’ll medicate and try again later. However, certain groups of people are more likely to have pain later: those under stress, who have allergies, are 40-59 years old, women. Lower molars and front teeth can be more painful. If the tooth is painful before the appointment, it can take longer to calm down. Expect the tooth to be sore for 2 days after the treatment and to have some sensation for up to 9 months. Call us if you are uncomfortable. We can control this pain for you.

**How long should a root canal treatment last?**

Root canal treatment is a therapy, not a cure: 5-10% can become reinfected over time. Although rare, the tooth can become reinfected years later. Retreatment will usually save the tooth. If a pocket of infection develops around the tip of the root, a special surgical procedure will be needed to remove this diseased tissue. For every 1 mm of pocketing around the root tip, the success of the treatment goes down 18% for a maximum risk of tooth loss of 30%.

**Possible Risks in Root Canals**

1. Pain or swelling after treatment
2. Persistent even permanent numbness
3. Separations of a cleaning file in the tooth that cannot be removed and might increase the risk

When the root canal is finished, a plastic filling can be used to finish a front tooth. If the root canal was on a back tooth, we recommend a cap (crown) to protect the tooth. Be sure to place the filling or crown within 1 week of completing the root canal. If you wait longer, the root canal seal will begin to break down and this could result in the failure of the root canal in the future.

The main reason back teeth with root canals are lost is because they become brittle over time and crack through the middle between the roots. A crown will hold the tooth together to prevent this in almost any case.

**Limited Warranty**

For 3 years following the date of the root canal treatment, we will refund your fee if the tooth requires retreatment by a specialist or extraction as long as you return for your regular recare cleaning appointments at the recommended intervals (surgical procedure excluded from warranty) and place a crown on the posterior tooth within 2 weeks of having the root canal.
SOMETIMES PEOPLE ASK:

Should I have a root canal or implant?

For many people faced with an abscessed tooth, they must decide whether it’s worth the trouble and expense of a root canal or an implant. HealthPark believes that a root canal is a better choice if the tooth is structurally sound. Here are the factors to consider:

Root Canal
1. Advantages
   a. Save the tooth
   b. Less expensive
   c. Covered by insurance
   d. 93-97% survival rate
2. Disadvantages
   a. May require crown lengthening
   b. Possible infection/fracture
   c. Possible recurrent decay, gum disease/ bone loss

Implants
1. Advantages
   a. Looks, feels, functions like a natural tooth
   b. Cannot decay
   c. 90-96% survival rate
2. Disadvantages
   a. Requires 2 surgeries
   b. Often not covered by insurance
   c. Success greatly reduced by diabetes, anticoagulant therapy, smoking, and bone loss due to gum disease.

I understand the material presented to me. The intention of this treatment is to eliminate the infection in this tooth. The procedures outlined will give me a 90-95% chance of this tooth lasting as long as the tooth on either side of it.

The cost of the filling or crown is not included in the fee for the root canal.

I understand my other choices are:
1. To extract the tooth.
2. To go directly to a root canal specialist.

I accept the recommended treatment.
I prefer that my tooth be extracted.

Date __________________________

Patient __________________________

Staff __________________________

Doctor __________________________

All of us at HealthPark hope this treatment will be helpful to you. We would like to help everyone keep their teeth comfortable and attractive for a lifetime.

When the nerve is injured by a blow or decay, bacteria can set up an infection in the space in the center of the tooth. This bacterial infection and your body’s attempt to fight this infection are what causes the pain. You can eliminate the infection by either extracting the tooth or having a root canal.