How does an endodontic procedure treat the tooth?

The procedure involves removal of the inflamed or infected pulp, careful cleaning and shaping of the root canal, and then filling and sealing of the space. Afterwards you may need a large filling or a crown to protect the remaining tooth and restore it to full function.

Although endodontic treatment does have a high success rate, some treatment are not successful. Certain factors may affect the chances of the treatment being successful, such as:

- The number of roots of the tooth
- Whether the root canals can be easily located
- The amount of tooth left
- The extent of infection prior to treatment
- Whether there has been a previous attempt at root canal treatment

What risks are involved?

- Risk of post-operative pain, swelling, sensitivity, infection
- Infection that may continue requiring further endodontic treatment or extraction
- Inability to fill the root canal because the canal is obstructed or has a unique curvature
- Fracture or breakage of the root or crown portion of the tooth during or after treatment as the tooth will become more brittle during and after this treatment
- Inadvertent breakage of files or instruments within the root canal system that are unable to be retrieved
- Perforation of the tooth during treatment
- Damage to existing fillings, crowns or veneers in order to access the root canal of your tooth
- In certain circumstances unforeseen conditions may arise that require a procedure that is different to that planned and may require treatment by a specialist (this is not something that can be done at PDSE)

What are the alternatives?

The purpose of endodontic treatment is to retain a tooth which may otherwise require extraction. There are alternatives such as:

- Doing nothing, but this may risk further symptoms
- Waiting for more definitive symptoms to develop
- Extracting the tooth
- Seeking treatment with an endodontic specialist

As with all dental procedures each of these has associated risks and benefits and you should discuss this with the dental student and their Clinical Supervisor prior to making a decision on how you wish to proceed.

Will I feel pain during or after the procedure?

With modern techniques and anaesthetics, most patients report that they are comfortable during the procedure. For the first few days after treatment, your tooth may feel sensitive, especially if there was pain or infection before the procedure. This discomfort can be relieved with over-the-counter or prescription medications. Your tooth may continue to feel slightly different from your other teeth for some time after your endodontic treatment is completed. However, if you have severe pain or pain that lasts more than a few days, you should call the Dental Education Facility where you had your appointment.

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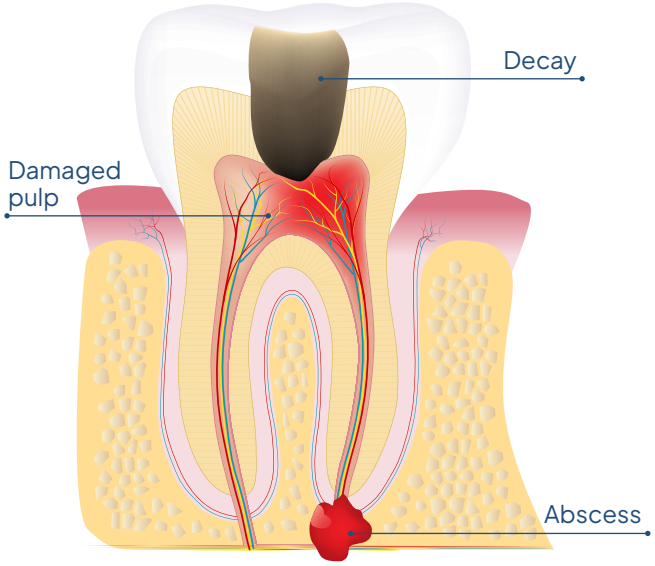
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Endodontics (Root Canal Treatment)

Patient Information

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Endodontics (Root Canal Treatment)

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Why would I need an endodontic procedure?

Endodontic treatment is necessary when the pulp (the soft tissue inside the root canal) becomes inflamed or infected. The inflammation or infection can be as result of a number of causes, such as: deep decay, repeated dental procedures on the tooth (for example a large filling or a crown) or a crack or chip in the tooth. In addition, an injury (such as a sporting injury) to a tooth may cause pulp damage even if the tooth has no visible chips or cracks. If pulp inflammation or infection is left untreated, it can cause pain or lead to an abscess.

What are the signs that a tooth requires endodontic treatment?

- Prolonged sensitivity to hot or cold stimuli
- Tenderness to touch and chewing
- Discolouration of the tooth
- Facial swelling because of infection from a tooth.

The swelling could also be localized and appear as a 'gum boil'. Sometimes there are no symptoms and changes on routine radiographs indicating the need for root canal treatment.



Endodontic procedure

Endodontic treatment is often performed over several visits and generally involves the following steps:

1. The Dentist examines and takes a radiograph of the tooth
2. Local anaesthetic is administered
3. A protective sheet called a 'rubber dam' is used to isolate the tooth from saliva
4. The infected pulp is accessed by drilling the top of the tooth
5. Small instruments (files) are used to carefully clean and shape the canal system
6. The canal system is filled with a rubber like material called 'gutta-percha'

If you have further questions please discuss them with the student treating you and the Clinical Supervisor who will be happy to provide you with any further information you require prior to making a decision.

