

What is a root canal?

Root canal therapy usually involves the removal of the tooth's pulp, a small thread-like tissue that was important for tooth development. Once removed, it is replaced with materials that seal off the root canal from its surrounding tissues. Years ago, diseased or injured teeth were often extracted. Today, even if the pulp is injured or infected, the tooth can often be saved through root canal therapy.

What is the nerve or pulp?

The nerve or pulp is soft tissue inside the tooth that contains blood vessels, nerves and connective tissue. It lies in a canal that runs through the center of the tooth. The crown (the part of the tooth visible above the gums) contains the pulp chamber. The pulp extends from this chamber down through a canal in the root that lies in the bone of the jaws. Teeth may have more than one root and several root canals.

What happens if the nerve is injured?

When the pulp is diseased or injured and unable to repair itself, it loses its vitality. The most common causes of nerve death are a cracked tooth, a deep cavity, complications involving large dental restorations or traumatic injury to the tooth, all of which can allow bacteria and their products to enter the nerve.

Why does the nerve need to be removed?

If the injured nerve is not removed, the tissues surrounding the root of the tooth can become infected and an abscess can form, resulting in pain and swelling. Even if there is no pain, certain substances released by bacteria can damage the bone that anchors the tooth in the jaw. Without treatment, the tooth may have to be removed.

Why couldn't you just remove the tooth?

There are many disadvantages to losing a natural tooth. When a tooth is removed and not replaced

the adjacent teeth may begin to shift from their normal position. This may cause the teeth to become crowded, which decrease biting and chewing efficiency. Crowded teeth may be more prone to gum disease because they are harder to keep clean than properly aligned teeth. A replacement tooth (an implant or bridge) is usually more expensive than a root canal.

How long will the restored tooth last?

A tooth with a root canal filling can provide years of service similar to teeth that have not been treated. Teeth with root canal therapy can, however, become decayed, develop fracture lines or gum disease, just like any other tooth. Oral hygiene and regular dental exams will help you keep and maintain healthy teeth, whether they have received root canals or not.

What does treatment involve?

Treatment consists of one or more visits to save your tooth. After giving you a local anesthetic so that you are comfortable during treatment, an opening is made through the top of the tooth into the pulp chamber. The nerve is then carefully removed from both the chamber and all the canals. Each root canal is cleaned and shaped to allow it to be filled. The canals are filled with a biocompatible material and then sealed. After completion, a crown is normally placed to strengthen the tooth and improve its appearance.

Adams Dental
One Kings Road
Madison, NJ 07940
973-377-6500

info@adamsdentalnj.com

