

Root treatment information

What is root treatment?

To understand root treatment, it's important to know how the tooth is made up. Teeth are living parts of the body, with a hard outer covering of enamel, a softer material underneath called dentine, a blood supply and a nerve for each tooth.

This nerve can become inflamed and lead to sensitivity, pain and even a dental abscess. Usually nerve damage is caused by trauma, such as a blow, tooth decay, gum disease or wear and abrasion. If such damage to the nerve is irreversible, your dentist will clean out the space where the nerve lies and seal it to prevent further infection or inflammation.

What does root treatment involve?

Root treatments can take several visits to the dentist depending on the shape of the nerve canal, whether any infection is present and how quickly the infection settles. Your dentist will use one of several techniques to clean and shape root canals, using fine metal instruments called files.

Rarely these files can break inside the tooth, even though they are only used once, in the unlikely event of this happening, more treatment could be needed, or you might be referred to a specialist to remove the fragment. Your dentist will talk to you about any specific risks of file breakage in your case. Sometimes the dentist will leave a broken piece of file in place, if this is the case, the tooth will have to be monitored and further treatment remains a possibility.

Following root treatment

Root treated teeth sometimes look darker than non-root treated teeth. Your dentist can discuss any cosmetic solutions to this problem if necessary. You may also experience some tenderness or soreness in the mouth after root treatment.

Sometimes the root may not settle down as desired, making it necessary to take the tooth out. Your dentist will discuss the likelihood of a successful treatment with you. Unfortunately, success cannot be guaranteed, particularly if your teeth have complex nerve canals. But do keep in mind that most root canal treatments are successful.

Additional treatment

Root treated teeth have already endured considerable amount of damage, so your dentist might suggest protecting the tooth with a crown. Remember that root treatment may have saved the tooth, but because of the damage done prior to treatment, a root treated tooth is likely to be vulnerable to breaking.