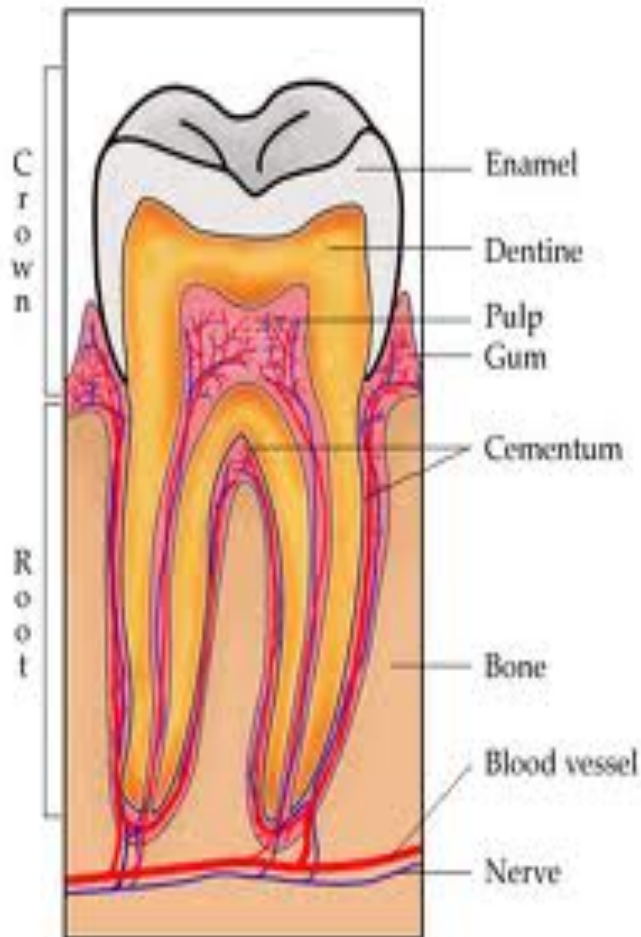


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## ROOT CANAL THERAPY

Years ago, the only choice for diseased teeth was removal. Today, there are many techniques for repairing and saving teeth. One common technique is called the root canal. Root canal therapy is generally necessary when the pulp of the tooth (the part that contains the nerves and blood vessels) is diseased or damaged. The disease or damage may be caused by a variety of factors. For example, bacteria from a deep cavity, a fracture or from gum (periodontal) disease can enter the pulp and cause an infection. Also, trauma may damage the blood supply or nerve. All these conditions can occur relatively painlessly or they may cause severe toothaches. In any event, the tooth must be treated with a root canal or the tooth could be lost and need to be extracted.

## **WHAT IS INVOLVED IN ROOT CANAL THERAPY?**

The first step is to remove the pulp tissue and clean the pulp chamber and root canals. Once cleaned, medication is placed inside the tooth and the tooth is temporarily sealed. In the case of a more severe infection, the dentist may elect to leave the tooth open for a couple of days to allow drainage. The dentist may prescribe an antibiotic. If a cyst or large area of infection is present at the tip of the root, the only treatment is to surgically cut the gum (periapical surgery) to get access to that area. When the tooth is free of bacteria and infection, the dentist will fill the pulp chamber and seal the tooth with material to prevent bacteria from re-entering the tooth. Once sealed, the outer portion of the tooth needs to be restored so that you can have a radiant smile again. Restoration is done with a variety of materials, including gold and porcelain. The choice is dependent on cost, which tooth is involved, the surfaces that need to be restored and the desire of the patient for a particular appearance. The entire treatment program will usually be completed in 3-5 visits.

## **WILL THE TREATMENT BE PAINFUL?**

The procedure may be done with or without local anesthesia. Afterwards, there may be temporary irritation of the tissue around the tooth. This is usually controlled with tylenol or aspirin. If the swelling or pain increases, call your dentist.

## **IS THE TREATMENT EXPENSIVE?**

The cost is usually less than the cost of removing a diseased tooth and replacing it with an artificial tooth. Today's artificial teeth are wonderful but keeping your own natural teeth is always best.

## **FACT OR FICTION?**

The tooth is dead: Fiction – the tooth continues to receive nourishment and support from the surrounding tissue.

The tooth will be a source of future infection: Fiction – a carefully treated tooth will not cause many of the conditions formally attributed to “dead teeth”.

The tooth will turn black: Fiction – it may darken slightly. The tooth can be whitened by bleaching.

The tooth probably won't last: Fiction – more than 90% of teeth treated last as long as the remaining teeth.