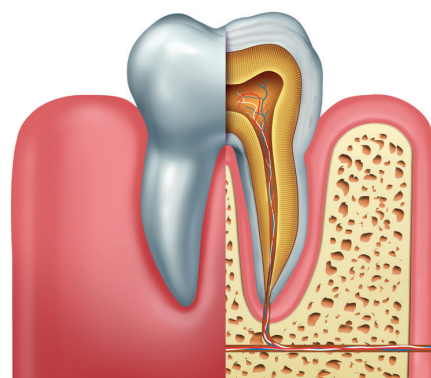


The teeth are hard, calcified structures. An adult will normally have twenty-eight teeth and many people also have four wisdom teeth too. The bulk of the tooth is made of dentine covered with enamel. In the centre of the tooth is a cavity containing nerves and blood vessels also called the **pulp**.

If the tooth becomes decayed, the enamel and the dentine become progressively damaged as the decay spreads. Normally the decay will be identified by the dentist during a routine examination and will be removed and the tooth filled to prevent further spread. If, however, the tooth decays further, or the decay spreads round an existing filling and it reaches the centre of the tooth, then the nerves in the pulp may become inflamed. Initially the person may feel sensitivity to hot and cold in the tooth. Subsequently the pulp will die and infection will then spread down the root through the root canals to form an infection at the end of the root and in the surrounding bone. This is called an abscess. Once an abscess has formed the tooth may become persistently painful, tender to touch and swelling may develop round the tooth and sometimes into the face.



#### There are several options for the tooth:

1. To attempt to save the tooth by making a hole in the top of the tooth and draining out any infection.
2. To extract the tooth

Both these treatments will allow the infection to be removed.

3. No treatment. If you leave the tooth untreated, the infection may well get worse and you could become ill with more swelling and pain and the situation could become an emergency.
4. **Note** that one or more courses of antibiotic will not provide a long term solution.

Once the infection has been drained, it may be possible to carry out a root canal treatment. This involves cleaning out the dead nerve (pulp) from the roots of the tooth and replacing it with a filling material to prevent further infection occurring.

#### It is important to understand that:

1. The tooth is in very poor condition and this is a last-chance treatment.
2. The structure of the tooth may prevent a root treatment from being carried out. For example, if the roots are curved or the root canals are narrow, it may not be possible to clean out the dead nerve tissue and the infection will not therefore be eliminated.
3. In such circumstances it may be possible to refer you to a specialist who has additional skills and special equipment to remove the dead nerve. This option is available under the NHS or privately. However, NHS specialist centres are few and referral to such a centre may involve considerable travel, a long wait and the centre may not be able to accept you for treatment. Private treatment will be more local and more readily available but will cost several hundred pounds.
4. Despite providing the treatment to a high standard the root filling may fail and the tooth might be lost.
5. The judgement about the appropriate treatment for your tooth will be discussed with you once the dentist has been able to fully examine the tooth and take the necessary X-rays.

**Root canal treatment involves the following procedures.**

1. A rubber sheet will be fitted round the tooth and over part of the face to isolate the tooth during the procedure. This will provide protection for you. It will also keep the tooth dry and reduce the risk of infection after the treatment has been completed.
2. Fine instruments, which look like needles, will be placed inside the tooth canals located within the roots to clean out the dead nerve material down to the end of the root. Disinfectant liquid will also be placed in the canal to destroy any bacteria which may be present.
3. When the canals have been cleaned, they will be filled with a special material to try to prevent re-infection.
4. Further X-rays will be taken during and at the end of the treatment to ensure that the root filling is correctly placed.
5. The treatment may be done in one visit but could take two or more visits to complete.

**Sometimes it is not possible to root fill the tooth. This may be because:**

1. The roots are of a shape such that it is not possible to clean the canals.
2. The canals are too narrow or are blocked.
3. The tooth, which is often brittle following the infection, may fracture.
4. The nature of the infection may be such that it cannot be cleared.
5. Occasionally, an instrument may break in the canal. Sometimes this may prevent successful treatment. Sometimes, even if the broken fragment cannot be retrieved, it may be sealed inside the root canal. It may require additional treatment in the future.
6. Rarely an instrument may perforate a root or sinus. This may or may not compromise the success of the treatment.
7. Rarely the chemical used to sterilise the canal, sodium hypochlorite, may leak from the canal.

**In such circumstances, the options will be:**

1. To extract the tooth
2. To refer you to the specialist (as above)

After a few weeks, it may be necessary to provide a crown for the tooth to improve its strength and to stop it breaking. The type of crown which will be appropriate will be discussed by your dentist and the options will be explained to you.

**PATIENT CONSENT**

**I hereby consent to undergo root canal treatment on the following:**

**Tooth/Teeth** \_\_\_\_\_ This has been explained to me by: \_\_\_\_\_ (name of dentist)

I understand the nature of the treatment, its purpose, risks and alternatives. I have been given the opportunity to ask any questions and understand that should any changes in the treatment be required, they will be explained to me and my specific consent obtained.

I understand that I should fully understand the treatment proposed and that the dentist will be happy to answer any questions that I might have.

**Name of Patient** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name of Dentist** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_



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