



## THE BLOCKLEY PARTNERSHIP

*Working together for your dental health*

### Root Canal Treatment

Root canal treatment or RCT (also called endodontics) is a treatment required when the blood and nerve supply in a tooth (known as the pulp) becomes infected through dental decay or injury.

#### Why is root canal treatment required?

If the pulp of a tooth becomes infected with bacteria, the infection can spread throughout the root canal system of the tooth and could eventually form an abscess in the bone around the root. If RCT is not carried out to remove the infection, the tooth may have to be extracted. Great care is taken during RCT to obtain a good predictable result and the treatment has a success rate of over 90%. There are however occasions when it is impossible to clear the infection and the tooth has to be lost. These instances are rare and one can usually indicate before treatment is started if there are difficulties that may reduce the chances of success.

#### What does the treatment involve?

The object of treatment is the removal of all bacteria from the root canal. The canal is then filled with a Gutta Percha resin and cement filling to prevent further infection. This allows the tissues around the root to heal. RCT is a complex and time consuming procedure and may involve two or more visits.

#### Does it hurt?

Treatment is routinely carried out under local anaesthetic. Sometimes in the initial stages there can be some discomfort which can take a few days to settle down. Pain after the treatment may necessitate the use of analgesics or antibiotics although often they are not required.

## What will my tooth look like after the treatment?

In the past a root filled tooth often darkened after treatment. With modern techniques this does not necessarily happen. However, if there is darkening this can usually be treated. Root filled teeth can become more brittle and if they have been heavily restored in the past it is advisable to crown the tooth within a year of completing the root filling.

## Is it expensive?

RCT is time consuming and this is reflected in the cost. The treatment has a success rate of over 90%. A good filling or crown following RCT is crucial to this success rate. Hence, the additional cost of the restoration on top of the tooth must be considered.

## What if I do not have this treatment?

The alternative is to have the tooth removed, because once the pulp has been destroyed by infection, it cannot heal. Whilst the removal of a tooth may be preferred in some cases, the overall balance of dental health can be more easily maintained by keeping as many of your natural teeth as possible. Losing the tooth can create other problems.

## Retreatment

RCT can fail some years after initially being completed due to reinfection by bacteria. Retreatment is possible but often more complicated than when first done. The success rate for retreatment is currently about 70%.

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