

Post Operative Information: Root Canal Therapy

The purpose of endodontic treatment is to remove the inflamed and/or infected pulp from a tooth and seal that created space with a biocompatible filling material. Treatment may take from 1 to 3 visits. This will allow for natural healing to occur, and the tooth is saved from extraction. The success of root canal treatment generally exceeds 95%, except for unusual circumstances (i.e. fracture, untimely treatment, non-restoration of the case, or some systemic medical conditions).

WHAT TO EXPECT:

*The local anesthetic, when used, will take a few hours to wear off. Care should be taken not to accidentally bite your cheek, tongue, or lip. If you're hungry, drink a milk shake, or other soft/liquid food until your local anesthesia has worn off. Chewing on your tooth the first day or so should be generally avoided to give it a more rapid and comfortable healing.

*If swelling was present prior to, or during treatment, it may take from 1 to 4 days to resolve. This is normal. Medications may have been prescribed or a drainage procedure performed to improve recovery.

*The tooth may be tender to biting pressure for up to approximately a week. This should gradually resolve until no discomfort is felt as healing and repair occurs to the area. Complete healing may in some cases take up to 3 months to occur. Each case is different, even on the same patient.

*It is important to report unusual findings to the doctor such as: sudden increases in pain, the bite feeling off, changes in the gum (swelling), changes in the tooth (lost filling or cracks), or allergic reactions so that further observation or treatment of these changes may occur in a timely matter.

*Lower teeth endodontic treatment may add additional stress and strain to the Temporal Mandibular Joint (TMJ...your jaw hinge). Proper cleaning of a tooth's pulpal canal space requires rigid attention to detail and repetitive mechanical shaping which may add discomfort and inflammation to the jaw resulting in soreness or difficulty in opening. Local anesthesia procedures also are more difficult and extensive to lower teeth which may add additional "trauma" to these areas. Patients, who grind or clench their teeth regularly, may notice an increased sensitivity with endodontic therapy.

*Upper teeth endodontic treatment may aggravate or be aggravated by chronic sinus conditions. Correct medical management and awareness of sinus changes will hasten recovery of endodontic therapy. Please report past history and existing changes of your sinuses to your doctor. Keep in mind that almost all of these symptoms do resolve with time, and that it is a small sacrifice to bear to keep a tooth.

*If you have been given oral (pill) or IV (intravenous) sedation for your endodontic treatment, special and specific instructions will be given to you to follow.

WHAT TO DO

*Take all suggested or prescribed medications as directed. Some prescriptions are given to you, but may be optional. Our prescriptions have a "tear-off" instruction sheet on its bottom. Please read these instructions! They are designed to help you identify if and when you need to begin taking the prescribed medication. Common side effects and interactions of the medication are also discussed. If you plan to be traveling, take the written prescriptions with you. They can be filled "out-of-state", but we recommend that you fill all medications prior to international travel just in case you need them. Be advised that international regulations differ and the quality or availability of prescribed medication varies greatly.

*If pain or swelling exists, get plenty of rest, eat a soft balanced diet, and drink plenty of fluids. "Burning the candle at both ends" will only run you down, and may cause problems or delay healing. Excessive alcohol or drug abuse during treatment may also decrease your resistance to infection and cause complications. Be good to yourself!

POST TREATMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

*It is important that the tooth is restored properly following root canal therapy. Because of previous decay, fillings, and the opening made through the chewing surface to perform a root canal, your tooth may be significantly weaker than a healthy, unfilled tooth. At the completion of a treatment visit at our office, a *temporary* filling is placed. This is designed only to protect and seal the internal filling materials in your tooth. A typical temporary filling is designed to last about 6 to 8 weeks only. To prevent your tooth from fracturing or leaking inside, a *permanent* restoration is needed. This consists of building up the tooth with a core filling to permanently restore the original access opening made through the chewing surface of your tooth to do the root canal.

Often a casted or standardized post is placed in one or more of the canals to help aid in retention or "attaching" the core filling to the tooth.

Usually a crown or "cap" is placed over the whole tooth to help prevent fracture. If your root canal was performed through an existing crown, the crown is generally not in need of replacement, assuming it fits correctly, and has no underlying leakage or decay. Usually a core filling and possibly a post is only required to restore the crown's opening.

Most restorative services are performed by your family dentist. That's what they do, and do best. Our office will also perform post and core services, upon request by your referring doctor. We do not place permanent crowns, but often temporary crowns may be placed by our office as an interim restoration only.

*Remember: One of the greatest causes of endodontic therapy failure is not completing the required restorative services in a timely manner. If your temporary filling falls out, leaks, or exceeds its typical lifespan the following may happen: 1) The root canal may need to be re-done at additional expense. 2) The tooth may have to be extracted if recurrent decay rendered the tooth non-restorable. 3) The tooth will generally be lost (extracted) if it has cracked.

If an unanticipated delay in restorative services occurs (i.e. medical illness, accident, pregnancy, travel, etc.), please contact our office for other interim options which can essentially "buy you time" until final restorative treatment can

be performed. If you do not have a family or general dentist, we can provide a list of qualified and competent practitioners in your area.

*At the end of your treatment, you will be sent a follow-up card in the mail to your home address. This may be from 1, 3, 6, 9, and/or 12 months following completion of your case. Most cases are followed once at 6 months, but specific or more complicated cases may be seen at different intervals until confirmation of healing has occurred. All follow up visits are seen at no charge to the patient, and include written correspondence with your referring doctor.

*When in doubt, ask! Call Dr. Russin's office @ 813/684-6509, or cell @ 813/786-3065 or visit our web site at <http://www.russindds.com> for further information. We're here to help.

Notes: