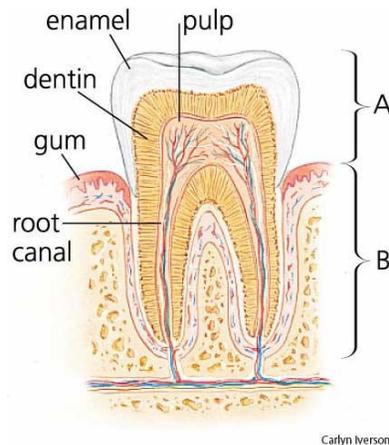


Root Canal Therapy or Endodontic Therapy

By TamraMontroy, D.D.S.

What is a root canal?

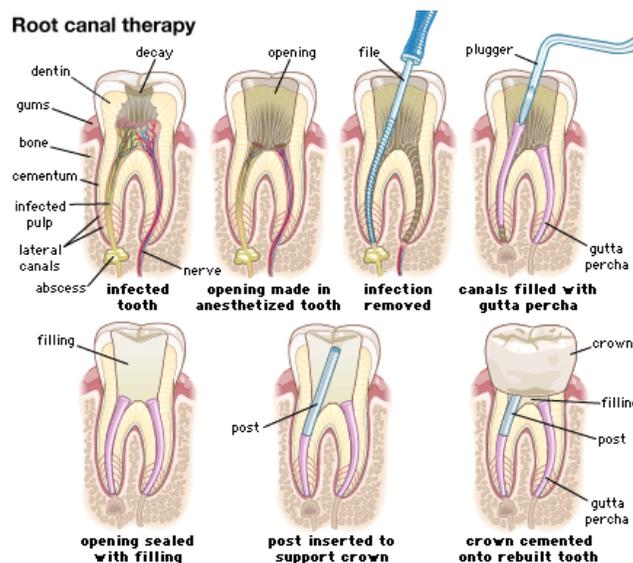
Your teeth have three layers to them the outside is enamel, the second layer is dentin, and the inside layer is called the pulp or root. Your root canals contain nerves and blood supply to your tooth.



Carlyn Iverson

What is root canal therapy (RCT)?

RCT or Endodontic therapy involves the removal of the pulpal structures, the subsequent shaping, cleaning, and decontamination of the hollows with tiny files and irrigating solutions, and the obturation (filling) of the decontaminated canals with an inert filling such as gutta percha and typically a eugenol-based cement



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Why would I need a RCT?

A tooth's nerve and pulp can become irritated, inflamed, and infected due to deep decay, a crack or chip in the tooth, or trauma to the face.

When a tooth's nerve tissue or pulp is damaged, it breaks down and bacteria begin to multiply within the pulp chamber. The bacteria and other decayed debris can cause an infection or abscessed tooth. An abscess is a pus-filled pocket that forms at the end of the roots of the tooth. An abscess occurs when the infection spreads all the way past the ends of the roots of the tooth. In addition to an abscess, an infection in the root canal of a tooth can cause:

- Swelling that may spread to other areas of the face, neck, or head
- Bone loss around the tip of the root
- Drainage problems extending outward from the root. A hole can occur through the side of the tooth with drainage into the gums or through the cheek with drainage into the skin.
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What are the signs and symptoms that a RCT may be needed?

Sometimes no symptoms are present; however, signs you may need a root canal include:

- Severe toothache pain upon chewing or application of pressure
- Prolonged sensitivity/pain to heat or cold temperatures (after the hot or cold has been removed)
- Discoloration (a darkening) of the tooth
- Swelling and tenderness in the nearby gums
- A persistent or recurring pimple on the gums
- Or just an overall discomfort of the tooth making it painful to chew

What are the alternatives to having root canal therapy?

Saving your natural teeth is the very best option, if possible. Your natural teeth allow you to eat a wide variety of foods necessary to maintain proper nutrition. The root canal procedure is the treatment of choice.

The only alternative to a root canal procedure is having the tooth extracted and replaced with a bridge, implant, or removable partial denture to restore chewing function and prevent adjacent teeth from shifting. These alternatives not only are more expensive than a root canal procedure but require more treatment time and additional procedures to adjacent teeth and supporting tissues.

How can I prevent needing RCT?

Since some of the reasons why the nerve of a tooth and its pulp become inflamed and infected are due to deep decay, following good oral hygiene practices (brushing twice a day, flossing at least once a day, and scheduling regular dental visits) may reduce the need for a root canal procedure. Trauma resulting from a sports-related injury can be reduced by wearing a mouth guard.

References: Encyclopedia Britannica