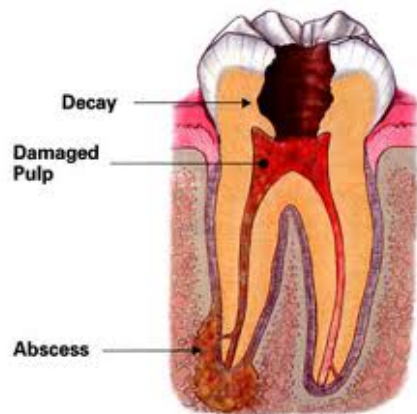


## Root Canal Treatment

Root canal treatment; also referred to as a root canal filling, or endodontics is required in order to save a tooth when it becomes infected.

Each tooth has an area of tissue in the middle called the 'pulp', which contains the nerve supply to your tooth. The pulp can become irritated due to decay, deep fillings, a fracture in the tooth or gum disease. This will cause pain in the long-run, but may have no symptoms to begin with.



Once the symptoms begin, the pulp has become damaged. As you can see in the diagram, when decay progresses this far down the tooth, it begins to infect the pulp. The infection has nowhere to go, and so forms an abscess at the end of the root. This stage can be very painful and may keep you awake at night. In other cases, you may just experience a dull ache, or the tooth may hurt when biting down on something, as the abscess becomes pressurised.

A fracture in the tooth irritates the pulp in the same way, as bacteria enter through the fracture, and gradually work their way down the pulp chamber.

Patients with gum disease may experience abscesses also, when bacteria enters the tooth in a different way. With gum disease, the gums become loose around the tooth, and so bacteria can enter along side the tooth and all the way to the bottom of the root. They harbour here, where we cannot clean, and in time, will form an abscess.

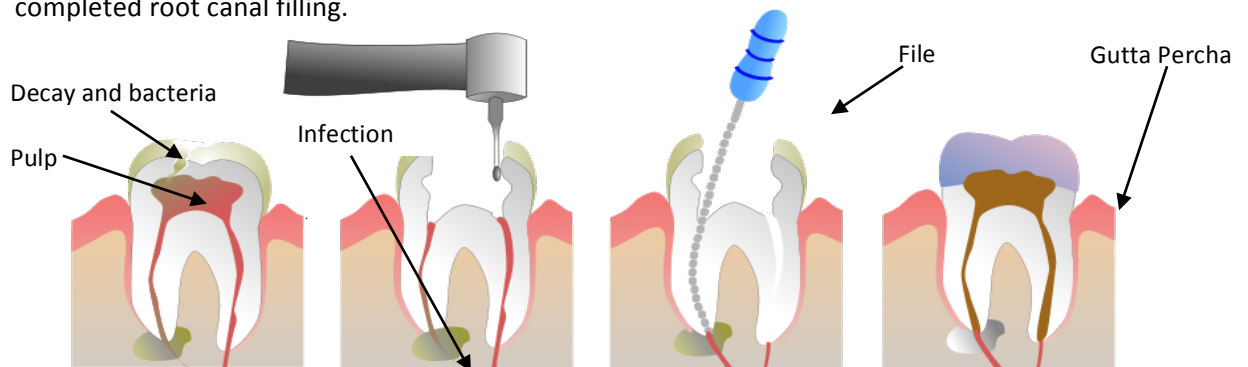
If not treated, an infected tooth will become very painful. Sometimes the pain will settle, however in time it will reoccur. Therefore the treatments options are an extraction or a root canal filling.

### what happens during root canal treatment?

You will be given a local anaesthetic injection, and then an opening is made in the top of the tooth down to the pulp. The dentist will then use narrow files to remove the nerve and clean the tooth. A few x-rays may be taken to determine the length of your tooth root/s. He/she will use various different disinfectants to assure all bacteria are removed.

The dentist will then replace the pulp, with a material we call Gutta Percha. This is necessary to prevent bacteria re-infecting the empty space where your nerve has been removed.

Then the tooth will be filled with an ordinary filling material. A final x-ray will be taken of the completed root canal filling.



Depending on the severity of your infection, the stages above may be done in more than one appointment. In most cases, after the tooth has been disinfected, the dentist may

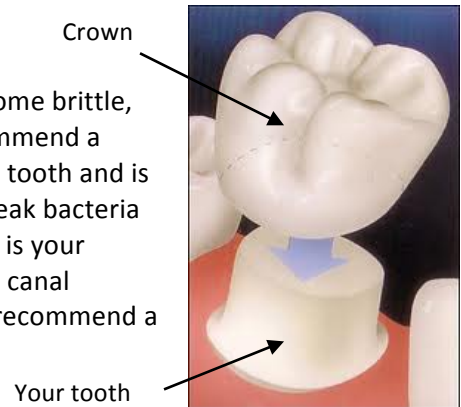
prescribe you some anti-biotics and suggest you come back in 2 weeks for completion of the root canal treatment.

### Where can I get it done?

At Valley Dental Practice we carry out general root canal treatments. However, some cases can be harder to treat due to the location of the infection or the shape of the root/s on the tooth. Sometimes they can be curved, or very thin, which makes the canals much harder to locate and fill efficiently. In this case, we would refer you to an endodontist, who would use specialist equipment to carry out your treatment.

### What happens after root canal treatment?

Due to an absence of the nerve supply now, the tooth can become brittle, and more likely to fracture or break. Therefore, we often recommend a crown after root canal treatment. A crown resembles your real tooth and is recommended for creating a good seal. They are less likely to leak bacteria than a filling. However crowning the tooth is not essential, and is your choice. Root filled teeth can also become darker following root canal treatment. If you are worried about this we would once again recommend a crown, or bleaching to make it lighter again.



### What if I get an infection again?

In private practice, root fillings are successful the majority of the time, depending on the severity of the infection. However, in the unlikely event of the infection reoccurring, or not settling, in most cases we are able to re-treat the tooth again. We might refer you to a specialist endodontist for a second opinion in difficult cases if needed. There is also a procedure where the tip of the root of the tooth is trimmed, and sealed to prevent infection entering the tooth through the root. This is the last resort to save the tooth.