

## **ROOT FILLING**

### **WHAT IS A ROOT FILLING?**

A root filling is when the nerve is removed from a tooth and is replaced with a waxy material called Gutta Percha.

### **WHY WOULD ONE NEED A ROOT FILLING?**

The most common reason is pain, often severe, caused by an irreversibly diseased nerve in a tooth. The alternative is to extract the tooth. Sometimes a root filling is done before crowning a tooth if extra space is required to hold the crown. It may also be necessary if the angulation of a tooth needs to be changed prior to crowning, or if the nerve is compromised and is at risk of dying underneath the crown.

### **WHAT DOES IT INVOLVE?**

There are 3 stages in doing a root filling.

- 1) **Cleaning:** Access is made in the tooth and the dead or dying nerve is removed along with any infected material. The canal is irrigated with a disinfectant solution.
- 2) **Shaping:** The canal is smoothed and prepared to receive the filling material.
- 3) **Filling:** The canal is filled with Gutta Percha or a similar soft material and the access cavity is restored.

### **HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE?**

This depends on a number of factors. In general it can take from one hour to do the complete procedure, to two appointments of an hour each for more complex cases.

### **WHAT IS THE SUCCESS RATE?**

Recent studies show that up to 90% of teeth which are root filled and restored to a satisfactory standard are still present in the mouth after 15 years. As a rule once diagnosed as necessary, the earlier the root filling is done the better the chance of success.

### **DO ALL ROOT FILLED TEETH NEED TO BE CROWNED?**

About 20% of all root filled teeth need to be crowned depending on how much tooth structure is left. The crown is required to hold the tooth together and prevent fracture because if the tooth does fracture, it may need to be extracted. Other factors to be considered include whether there is a tooth grinding habit or if the tooth is going to be used to support a bridge.

### **DO ALL ROOT FILLED TEETH GO DARK?**

Some root filled teeth go dark over time. If this happens one option is to whiten it from inside the tooth. This may need to be done every 5 years or so but in some cases can last for many years. Alternatively a crown or veneer may be placed.

### **PATIENT PREPARATION PRIOR TO TREATMENT:**

It is recommended that patients eat before this treatment as the area will be numb for a number of hours. If the root filling is to be done in one appointment (or for the first appointment of a two visit procedure) the patient is advised to have some "quiet time" for a minimum of two hours after the appointment, where they sit quietly and read a book, watch TV. etc. Relaxation helps prevent post treatment swelling and discomfort.

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## **ROOT CANAL TREATMENT**