



# **A Tooth-Saving Solution:**

## **Endodontic Treatment**

**By: Penn Dental Family Practice**



## What is Endodontics?

Endodontics is a specialized field of dentistry that deals with the inner structures of the tooth, specifically your tooth's pulp. If you have been referred to an endodontist, you most likely have developed an infection and/or experienced trauma to the tooth.

Your experience with endodontic treatment might begin with a seemingly innocuous cavity. Your untreated cavity may have expanded, leading to an infection or your tooth's pulp. Perhaps your situation is the result of a sudden injury that damaged the pulp by cracking or dislodging the tooth from its socket. In either case, endodontic treatment can provide an effective solution to your pain.



## What Are the Causes of Pulp Damage?

It may take significant time for your pulp to become infected. The dental pulp lies beneath the white enamel and dentin layer. Comprised of blood vessels, nerves, and connective tissue, the pulp grows the root of the tooth during development. Once the tooth is fully developed, it can survive without the pulp because the tooth has access to other live tissues surrounding it. But diseased pulp can put these surrounding tissues and bone at grave risk.

Pulp damage can be caused by a variety of oral health concerns:

- Deep-seated dental decay that has remained untreated for years, including any decay that develops beneath a filling.
- Habitual tooth grinding, or bruxism, which leads to broken teeth and bone loss over decades.
- Long-standing cracks in the teeth, whether from chewing on hard foods, grinding at night, or just general wear and tear.
- Advanced gum disease, or periodontitis, where the infection results in a painful abscess and extends into the tooth's pulp.

Your dental history is important in determining the causes of the pulp damage and the appropriate course of treatment.





## Do I Need to See an Endodontist?

Maybe you are unsure whether you need to visit an endodontist. The first step is to visit your general dentist for a check-up and regular dental cleaning. However, if you have reason to believe your situation is urgent, you can request an endodontic consultation at one of Penn Dental Family Practice's offices. One or more of the following symptoms typically accompany inflammation or infection. When pulp damage is suspected, it should be evaluated by a qualified endodontist as soon as possible:



- Sensitivity to hot and cold temperatures
- Pain when biting or chewing
- Sudden, unprovoked pain in a particular tooth
- Facial swelling
- Oozing of pus around the affected tooth
- A cracked or fractured tooth

An endodontist will assess your symptoms and determine the course of treatment.



## The Risks of Abscessed Teeth

Leaving an infection untreated carries major health risks. Once the pulp has become diseased, it is no longer able to defend against bacteria. The longer this situation remains untreated, the more severe the infection will become. An endodontic abscess (a pocket of pus) can develop and spread into the surrounding bone, leading to bone erosion. The teeth may need to be removed and may not be replaceable with dental implants if the jaw bone loss is significant. Advanced bone loss increases your probability of losing more teeth and can cause a collapse of the lower third of the face.

## The Purpose of Root Canal Treatment

The fundamental purpose of root canal treatment is to save your tooth. While tooth extraction will necessitate further dental work to replace the tooth and/or stabilize the surrounding teeth, no such procedures are needed after a root canal. You can continue using your natural tooth after treatment because it will accomplish these four aims:

- 1 Removes decay and infection.** Tooth decay, infected nerve tissue, pus, and debris are removed from the tooth.
- 2 Shapes the canals.** The canals of the tooth root must be shaped so that residual bacteria are unable to take up residence. The shaping process utilizes medication, special disinfectants, and small, precise instruments to ensure the regularity of the canals. Depending on how stubborn the bacteria are, this step may need to be repeated before they are completely eliminated.
- 3 Fills the canals.** Once the canals have been properly shaped, they will be permanently sealed to prevent re-infection.
- 4 Restore structure.** A custom-made restoration, such as a crown, is placed on the tooth to ensure that no bacteria can leak in again. If the tooth has lost considerable structure due to decay or cracks, porcelain or gold alloy materials may be recommended.





## Endodontic Treatment at Penn Dental Family Practice

You may be surprised to learn that root canal treatment works even in cases where the root has died. Dental research establishes this treatment as best practice for increasing the natural life of the tooth. Placement of a dental crown is one of the most important factors in influencing a successful outcome.

At Penn Dental Family Practice, our patients enjoy the benefits of receiving root canal treatment from endodontists at the forefront of their field. In fact, many of our experienced dentists are also instructors at the prestigious University of Pennsylvania School of Dental Medicine. Every year, we perform hundreds of root canal procedures that alleviate patients' pain while saving the affected tooth. While every patient has their own unique story when they arrive at our office, we work hard to ensure that everyone gets the happy ending they need and deserve.

We look forward to helping you or your loved ones by saving the tooth so that you can enjoy natural tooth function for many years to come. To make a consultation with one of our caring endodontists, please call our offices at **215-898-7337**!

