
After Root Canal Treatment: What to Expect and How to Care for Your Tooth

Your tooth may feel sore for a few days after a root canal. Protect it from hard chewing until the permanent filling or crown is placed.

Root canal treatment removes infected or inflamed tissue from inside the tooth and seals the canals so you can keep the tooth. After the appointment the tooth and surrounding gum may feel sore, especially if there was infection beforehand. This guide describes usual recovery, how to protect the tooth before a final crown or filling is complete, and when to call the clinic versus seek emergency care. Your endodontist or dentist may have placed a temporary filling or started a crown—follow their specific timing for eating and cleaning. For what the procedure involves, see root canal treatment and what happens during a root canal. Symptoms that led to treatment are discussed on tooth pain and cavities.

What was done and what still needs finishing

The nerve space inside the tooth was cleaned, shaped, and filled. The tooth is no longer alive, but the root remains anchored in bone and still functions for chewing once properly restored.

Most back teeth and many front teeth need a permanent filling or crown after root canal treatment. Chewing hard foods on an unprotected molar can fracture it. Your dentist will tell you how soon the final restoration must be placed.

If treatment was completed in more than one visit, you may have a temporary seal between appointments. Avoid sticky or hard foods on that tooth until the tooth is permanently restored, and keep the temporary intact.

Root canal therapy treats the source of many damaged teeth scenarios where the alternative would be extraction. Completing the crown or filling is part of making that investment last.

Pain and sensitivity after treatment

Soreness when biting or mild aching for several days is common, especially if the tooth was painful or abscessed before treatment. Inflammation in the ligament around the root takes time to settle even though the inside of the tooth is cleaned.

Use only pain relievers your dentist recommended or prescribed for you. If you already take medicines for other conditions, ask before adding anything new.

Sensitivity to pressure that slowly improves is expected. Pain that builds after day three, swelling of the face, or a pimple-like bump on the gum that grows may mean persistent infection and needs a clinic visit—not repeated antibiotics without assessment.

managing pain and swelling describes ice, rest, and comfort habits that apply here too, as long as they do not conflict with your tooth's temporary restoration.

Biting, chewing, and protecting the tooth

Until the final restoration is placed, treat the tooth gently. Chew on the other side when possible. Avoid nuts, ice, hard candy, and biting into apples with a molar that has only a temporary buildup.

If your bite feels high—the tooth hits first when you close—call the clinic. A high bite after treatment can make the tooth very tender and should be adjusted quickly.

A temporary crown can come off. Save the piece, keep the tooth clean, and contact the clinic for re-cementation. Do not superglue it yourself.

Once a permanent crown or filling is in place, return to normal chewing gradually as advised. The root-treated tooth can still get decay at the gum line without good hygiene.

Oral hygiene around a root-treated tooth

Brush twice daily with fluoride toothpaste and clean between teeth as you normally would, unless told to wait briefly on flossing around a temporary. Plaque at the gum line still causes periodontal problems on treated teeth.

If a temporary filling is rough or shreds floss, use gentle technique or switch to an interdental brush your dentist approves until the final visit.

Mouthwash is optional unless prescribed; chlorhexidine or other rinses should be used for the course instructed, not indefinitely without advice.

Ongoing general dentistry check-ups help catch cracks, decay, or crown margins that fail early when they are easier to repair.

Swelling, infection, and antibiotics

Mild facial swelling immediately after a difficult case may occur. Swelling that increases after the first day, fever, or feeling unwell suggests spreading infection—call the dental clinic the same day.

If antibiotics were prescribed, take them as directed for the full course unless your dentist changes the plan because of side effects. Stopping early can allow bacteria to return.

An abscess may drain and leave a bad taste; report sudden increases in pain or swelling even if you are already on medicines.

Allergic reaction to prescribed drugs—rash, breathing difficulty, facial swelling away from the treated side—requires emergency medical care and notifying your dentist afterward.

Normal recovery timeline

Many patients feel much better within a few days to a week. Deep infection cases can take longer for bite tenderness to fade.

Numbness from anaesthetic resolves within hours. Return of severe spontaneous pain weeks or months later warrants an exam to rule out a new problem, crack, or rare persistent canal issue.

The tooth may feel slightly different from neighbours; that is not always a problem. A consistent dull ache when chewing after the crown is placed should be evaluated.

Read understanding tooth pain if you need language to describe what you feel at follow-up.

When to call the clinic versus emergency care

Dental clinic: increasing pain or swelling after day two, lost temporary filling or crown, bite feels high, visible crack, fever with tooth symptoms, or questions about medicines.

Emergency medical services: difficulty breathing or swallowing, rapid facial swelling toward the eye or neck, high fever with confusion or severe illness, or allergic reaction to medication.

Do not wait for a routine slot if you suspect spreading infection; most dental teams reserve time for post-treatment concerns.

If trauma breaks the tooth after root canal treatment, see dental emergencies principles and contact the clinic promptly—damaged teeth may apply depending on the fracture.

Finishing restoration and long-term care

Schedule the crown or permanent filling within the window your dentist gave. Delay raises fracture risk.

After the final restoration, floss around the crown margin and attend regular exams. Root-treated teeth can last many years with proper coverage and hygiene.

If the tooth was part of a larger plan for cavities or prior deep decay, neighbouring teeth may need attention too—ask at the review visit.

Related step-by-step guidance for crowns and fillings appears in after filling or crown once your root canal phase is complete.

Frequently Asked Questions

Is pain normal after a root canal?

Mild to moderate soreness, especially when chewing, is common for several days. Severe or worsening pain, facial swelling, or fever is not typical and should be reported to your dentist the same day.

Can I eat normally right away?

Wait until numbness wears off to avoid biting your cheek or tongue. Then favour soft foods on the treated side until any temporary restoration is replaced. Your dentist will say when normal chewing is safe.

Do I still need a crown if the tooth feels fine?

Often yes for back teeth. The tooth is more brittle after treatment and a crown helps prevent fracture. Follow your dentist's recommendation on timing and type of final restoration.

What if my temporary filling falls out?

Contact the clinic promptly. The canal can become contaminated if left open. Keep the area clean and avoid chewing on that tooth until it is resealed.

Where can I learn more on this website?

See root canal treatment, what happens during a root canal, after filling or crown, and managing pain and swelling for linked topics your dentist may reference at follow-up.

Important reminder

These instructions are general educational guidance. Your dentist may give instructions that differ depending on the procedure, your medical history, and how treatment was performed. Follow the written or verbal instructions provided specifically for you. This guide does not replace professional dental or medical advice, diagnosis, or emergency care.