

# Root Canal Treatment



CANADIAN DENTAL ASSOCIATION  
DENTAL INFORMATION SYSTEM

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# Root Canal Treatment

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Dentists today believe that the best teeth are your own, and they try their best to make sure you do not lose any of them. Successful root canal treatment lets you keep your tooth. The only other option is to have your tooth removed.

Keeping your tooth helps to prevent your other teeth from drifting out of line and causing jaw problems or gum disease. Saving a natural tooth avoids having to replace it with either a bridge or an implant.

This booklet is about root canal treatment.

**Here's what you will learn about in this booklet:**

- ▶ *What is root canal treatment?* page 2
- ▶ *When root canal treatment is needed* page 3
- ▶ *Dentists and root canal treatment* page 4
- ▶ *How it is done* page 5
- ▶ *Things to consider* page 7
- ▶ *Root canal retreatment and root canal surgery* page 9



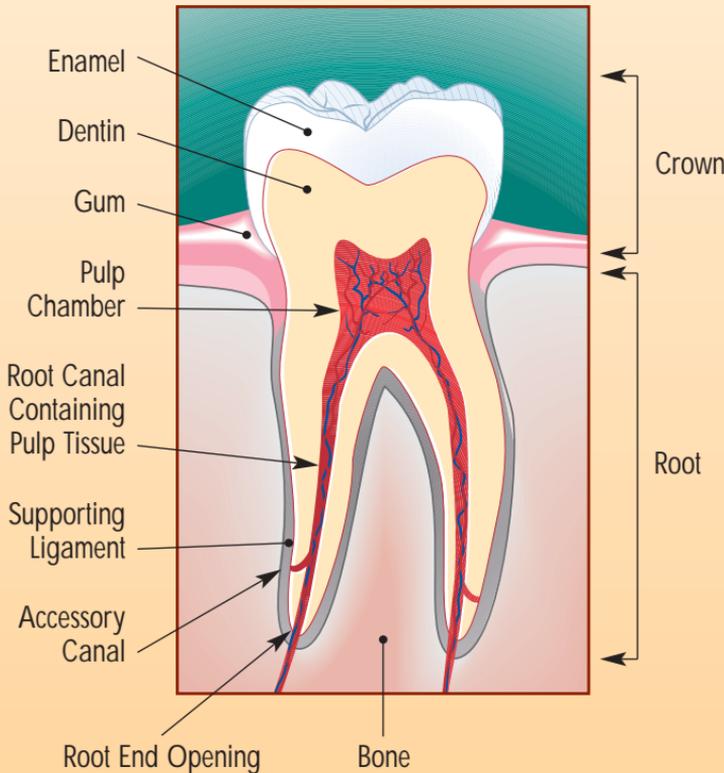
# What is root canal treatment?

Teeth are made up of three hard layers:

- enamel
- dentin, and
- cementum

There is a space inside the hard layers of each tooth. It is called the root canal system and it is filled with soft dental pulp. This pulp is made up of

nerves and blood vessels that help the tooth grow and develop. Once a tooth is fully grown, it can survive without a pulp. If the pulp of a tooth becomes infected, then a root canal (or **endodontic** treatment) is needed. When this is done, the pulp is removed.



*A healthy tooth*

# When root canal treatment is needed

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The pulp inside a tooth can be damaged by cracks in the tooth, deep cavities or accidents.

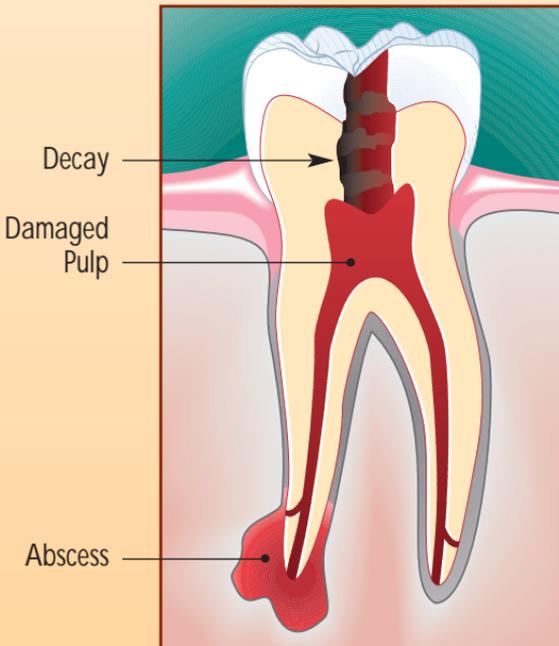
Germ (or bacteria) can get into the tooth and can lead to infected tooth pulp. This may cause pain and/or swelling. Sometimes, a pulp becomes infected or dies, but does not cause any pain. Your dentist may notice:

- changes in the colour of the tooth,

- changes in your gums or
- changes picked up by a dental x-ray.

Sometimes, if a great deal of dental work is needed, your dentist can tell from your exam and x-rays that the pulp of a tooth is not likely to survive.

In all these cases, root canal treatment can ease or prevent symptoms, and save the tooth.



*An abscessed tooth*