

# Root Canals

Working to Preserve the Natural Tooth

## EXPERT ADVICE

### Advances in Endodontics

“Endodontic treatments, like root canals, treat the *inside* of the tooth, helping you maintain your natural smile. Can all teeth be treated endodontically? The answer is that *most* can – thanks to advances in endodontic procedures. Occasionally, a tooth can't be saved because the root canals are not accessible, the root is severely fractured, the tooth doesn't have adequate bone support, or the tooth cannot be restored. However, improved treatment options are making it possible to save teeth that even a few years ago would have been lost. For example, if a nonsurgical root canal is not effective, endodontic surgery may be able to save the tooth.”

Source: American Association of Endodontists



#### What is involved in a root canal?

A root canal is when a dentist or endodontist removes diseased or damaged tissue from the pulp chamber of the tooth, cleans the chamber out, reshapes it if necessary, fills it, and seals it once again.

#### Who needs a root canal?

By far the most common reason someone would need a root canal is to treat decay that has developed in the pulp chamber of the tooth. The teeth exist in an environment teeming with bacteria whose job is to digest sugar and excrete tooth-damaging wastes. However, if for some reason this bacteria enters the pulp chamber (reasons include poor hygiene leading to tooth decay, cavities, chips or cracks in tooth caused by injury), it can do irreversible damage, beginning an inflammatory process that leads to infection, decay, and eventually bone damage, abscesses (collections of pus at the end of tooth roots), and pulp cell death.

#### How do I know if I need one?

Only a trained dentist or endodontist can determine whether you need a root canal, but

symptoms to look for include toothache and pain, tooth darkening and discoloration, gum swelling, sensitivity to pressure, and prolonged sensitivity to heat or cold. Sometimes, however, there are no symptoms. This is why regular checkups are important.

#### Why not just have my tooth pulled?

Extraction used to be the primary treatment for unhealthy tooth pulp. However, almost every endodontist or dentist will tell you that if a root canal is feasible, it is the far better option. A root canal allows the dentist to remove the unhealthy pulp tissue without removing the tooth *itself*. Why remove—and later have to replace—a tooth, if, other than its damaged pulp, it functions normally?

#### I've heard it's really painful. Is that true?

This is actually a common misconception. The reality is, a patient will likely experience worse pain by *not* getting one. Most root canals are painless with good local anesthesia. 🦷

# Your Chattanooga Area Endodontists Root Canal Specialists

We support the Greater Chattanooga area General Dentists and we are proud to partner with them to make every effort to help patients maintain their natural teeth and keep healthy, beautiful smiles.

#### EAST TENNESSEE ENDODONTICS

Joseph B. Milholm, DMD  
Erik E. Jansen, DMD

Chattanooga: 1720 Gunbarrel Rd., Suite 308  
Cleveland: 2222 Chambliss Ave. N.W.  
(423) 892-3131

#### SOUTHEASTERN ENDODONTICS

Matthew Brock, DDS, MSD  
Yvette Burns, DDS, MS

2030 Hamilton Place Blvd., Suite 380  
Chattanooga, TN 37421  
(423) 892-4727

#### NORTH RIVER ENDODONTICS

C. Brad Davis, DDS

1009 Executive Dr., Suite 101  
Hixson, TN 37343  
(423) 876-0408

#### ENDODONTIC GROUP PC

Kevin P. Bryant, DMD

1001 Carter St., Suite H  
Chattanooga, TN 37402  
(423) 267-1853

#### CENTER FOR ENDODONTICS

John P. Hoover, DDS, PC

6101 Shallowford Rd., Suite 101  
Chattanooga, TN 37421  
(423) 894-8942

#### DR. JAMES E. BOULTON, DDS

2292 Chambliss Ave.

NW, Suite B  
Cleveland, TN 37311  
(423) 476-7600

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