

Don't Get a Root Canal Until You Know the Facts: 5 Signs That It's Really Necessary



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Let's face it, we never appreciate our healthy teeth until we've had to suffer through a painful toothache—often the result of severe tooth decay. And, as many experts have said, one of the best things you can do to maintain a healthy mouth is to keep all of your natural teeth. **Here's why.**

We've all probably heard the saying "your eyes are the windows to your soul," but did you also know that your teeth are like your body's white picket fence? They work together with your gums, mucus membranes and salivary glands to protect your body and keep harmful bacteria from gaining easy passage to your vital organs.

There are instances where individuals need endodontic treatments (i.e. a root canal) to keep their natural teeth healthy, pain-free and to avoid extractions. **Endodontics** are any sorts of treatments that occur inside the tooth itself. What exactly does one mean by the "inside" of a tooth? To answer this question, let's take a quick look at the tooth itself.

Your tooth consists of several different layers: **enamel** (the outer layer or the white part that everyone sees), **dentin** (a very hard layer directly beneath the enamel) and a soft tissue called **pulp**. The pulp is where all the nerves, blood vessels, and connective tissues of your teeth are located. It reaches from the inside of the crowns to the very tips of the roots on all of your teeth and joins with the tissues surrounding the root of your tooth.

Dental pulp plays its most vital role when your teeth are first developing. It's possible to maintain a healthy tooth without pulp once it's fully grown, since the tooth is capable of receiving its nourishment from the surrounding tissues. **But, if the pulp of your tooth becomes infected or inflamed, it can cause major problems.**

Dental pulp infection or inflammation can result from one of many different causes including:

- A crack or a chip in the tooth
- An injury to the tooth that may not have left any visible signs
- Deep decay
- Repeated dental procedures on that tooth.

If left untreated, this infection or inflammation can become extremely painful, or can cause an abscess at the root of the tooth. That's why if the pulp in your tooth is severely infected or inflamed, you'll definitely need a root canal. So, how do you know if this has happened (or could be happening)?

Here are five signs to look out for:

1. **Noticeable toothache pain**—Most people in need of a root canal will likely feel pain at the tooth's site. Pain is especially present when you're chewing food.

2. **Prolonged sensitivity to cold and heat**—A tooth in need of a root canal is very likely to be sensitive to hot or cold food items. You may even experience irritation after the food item has been removed from your mouth.
3. **Tooth Discoloration**—If you have a painful toothache and your tooth is sensitive to hot and cold foods, then you'll definitely want to look in a mirror for any noticeable discoloration. Often, when a tooth is severely decayed, it will have a discolored exterior.
4. **Swelling, drainage and/or tenderness in the lymph nodes, bones and surrounding gums**—When you need a root canal, the gums surrounding your decayed tooth will generally be swollen and sensitive to the touch.
5. **A persistent or recurring lesion on your gum**—A severely decayed tooth whose nerve has died occasionally produces pimple-like lesions on a person's gums. The lesions, which tend to come and go, are literally drains for pus from an infected tooth. Individuals may notice these lesions when they discharge a bad taste (from the pus) into their mouth or their dentist could pick up on them at a regular exam.

If you experience any of these symptoms, call your dentist right away and make an appointment to have your tooth examined. If the dentist determines you need a root canal, don't fret. Modern technology has rendered most root canal treatments as routine and non-threatening as filling a cavity.

Are you looking to stop a root canal from becoming a dental disaster but still need a plan that makes this procedure affordable? Or, are you new to town and need to find a new dentist? Either way, Universal Dental Plan can help.

Take advantage of our free dentist finder service and our live, local and friendly staff will help you find an expert dental professional at a location convenient to you.

And, if you sign up for our plan, you'll enjoy immediate access to 20-50% off all dental procedures plus oral exams free of charge. Visit our website www.universaldentalplan.com and sign up today.