

Congratulations! By saving your tooth with root canal treatment, you have made a significant step towards better oral health. This guide is intended to answer questions you may have about the post-operative period and to give you information on how to preserve the health of your tooth following root canal treatment.

#### **What should I expect following endodontic treatment?**

- The root canal system inside your tooth has been thoroughly cleaned, and the irritated tissue and bacteria that have caused you to need root canal treatment are gone.
- In necrotic (infected) and retreatment cases there are high concentrations of bacteria which are present both in the tooth and bone. These bacteria can irritate your immune system and over the course of three days, result in pressure (radiating pain) and swelling. Your endodontist will inform you if your case falls into this category and will prescribe the appropriate medication and follow-up.
- It is normal to feel some tenderness in the area over the next few days as your body undergoes the natural healing process. You may also feel some tenderness in your jaw from keeping it open for an extended period of time. These symptoms are temporary and usually respond very well to over-the-counter pain medications. It is important for you to follow the instructions on how to take these medications. Remember that narcotic medications, if prescribed, may make you drowsy, and caution should be exercised in operating dangerous machinery or driving a car after taking them.
- Your tooth may continue to feel slightly different from your other teeth for some time after your root canal treatment has been completed. However, if you have severe pain or pressure that lasts more than a few days, contact your endodontist.

#### **Guidelines for Post-Treatment Care**

- Do not eat anything until the numbness in your mouth wears off. This will prevent you from biting your cheek or tongue.
- Do not chew or bite on the treated tooth until you have had it restored by your dentist. This prevents both fracturing and possible loss of your treated tooth.
- Be sure to brush and floss your teeth as you normally would.
- If the opening in your tooth was restored with a temporary filling material, it is not unusual for a thin layer to wear off in-between appointments. However, if you think the entire filling has come out, contact your endodontist.
- Contact your endodontist right away if you develop any of the following:
  - a visible swelling inside or outside of your mouth;
  - an allergic reaction to medication, including rash, hives or itching, tightness in throat or difficulty breathing (nausea is not an allergic reaction);
  - a return of original symptoms; or
  - your bite feels uneven or high.

#### **Taking Care of Your Tooth**

- Root canal treatment is only one step in returning your tooth to full function. A proper final restoration of the tooth is extremely important in ensuring long-term success.
- Contact your dentist within two weeks to arrange your next appointment. If your tooth is being treated in more than one visit by an endodontist, do not return to your dentist for the final restoration until the root canal treatment is completed.

#### **What the Future Holds**

- The tooth that has had appropriate endodontic treatment followed by a proper restoration can last as long as your other natural teeth. After the tooth has been restored, you need only practice good oral hygiene, including brushing, flossing, regular checkups and cleanings.
- Your dentist or endodontist may periodically x-ray the tooth to ensure that healing has occurred. Occasionally, a tooth that has undergone endodontic treatment does not heal or pain continues. At times, the tooth may become painful or diseased months or even years after successful treatment. Often when this occurs, repeating the endodontic procedure can save the tooth.