

## *Post Treatment Instructions for Endodontic (root canal) Treatment*

### **What to Expect:**

1. It is not uncommon for the tooth to still be uncomfortable in the first few days following treatment. The area around the tip of the root(s) of the tooth needs time to heal. Your dentist may have given you prescriptions for pain medication and/or antibiotics. Taking these prescriptions as prescribed will make you more comfortable while healing occurs.
2. Your tooth may be sensitive to biting pressure and may feel loose for several days. This is not abnormal and should last only a few days.
3. You may feel a depression or rough area (on the top of a back tooth or the back of a front tooth) where the access to the pulp was made. This is a soft, temporary filling material that was placed to temporarily close the opening. The material may wear as you chew on it, but it extends far into the tooth and should not be a concern.
4. Occasionally a small "bubble" or "pimple" will appear on the gum a few days after treatment. This represents the release of pressure and bacteria from the infected area around the tip of the root of the tooth. It should disappear within a few days as healing progresses.
5. It is normal for it to take a few days for your symptoms to subside. The important factor is that the tooth should gradually feel better by 3 to 4 days following treatment. In general, the longer the pain was present prior to treatment, the longer it will take to subside.

### **What You Should Do or Not Do**

1. If you were given prescriptions for antibiotics (Penicillin, Keflex, Erythromycin, Clindamycin, etc.) and/or pain medications (Vicodin, Tylenol #3, Darvocet, Ultracet, Lortab, Motrin, etc.) please fill them immediately and begin taking them as prescribed. You should begin the pain medication as soon as possible and not later than one hour after your appointment in order to allow it to take effect before your anesthetic subsides.
2. Take the full course of the antibiotics (usually 7 or 10 days) even if the tooth begins to feel better before you finish them. In general, it is best not to take both the antibiotic and the pain medication at the same time because this can cause gastrointestinal problems. For the same reason, it is best if you do not take the medications on an empty stomach unless the instructions specifically state to take on an empty stomach. The pharmacist will give you a sheet for each medication that lists precautions and side effects. Please read these sheets. Be particularly careful when taking pain medications, because they can make you drowsy. You should not operate an automobile or other machinery when taking these medications. If your discomfort is minimal, and you do not feel

that you need the prescription strength pain medication, over-the-counter pain medications like ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin, Nuprin, etc.) or acetaminophen (Tylenol) may be adequate.

3. Eat soft nutritious foods or liquids at regular meal times. You need nutrition to promote healing, maintain blood sugar levels, and make you feel better. Failure to maintain proper nutrition also leads to increased side effects from medications.
4. In order decrease discomfort, try to chew on the opposite side from the tooth that was treated and avoid unnecessary chewing (chewing gum, etc.).
5. Avoid hard foods that may fracture the tooth or temporary filling.
6. Avoid sticky foods (caramels, taffy, etc.) which could dislodge your temporary filling.
7. Brush and floss your teeth as normal.

**Please contact your doctor if:**

1. You have significant side effects from your medications that you cannot tolerate (itching, gastrointestinal problems, etc.).
2. You encounter significant post-treatment swelling.
3. More than three days after treatment, you are experiencing no improvement in your symptoms.
4. Your tooth fractures.
5. The temporary filling material is dislodged or feels "high" when biting.
6. Your body temperature goes above 101 degrees.
7. You have any questions.

**Very Important**

**Teeth that have had root canal treatment normally need to have a crown (cap) placed on them as soon as possible after the treatment is completed---unless advised otherwise by your dentist. This prevents the fracture of the already brittle and damaged tooth. The most common cause of the loss of a root canal treated tooth is failure to have a crown placed. Failure to do so makes the tooth much more prone to fracture and/or become re-infected due to deterioration of the root canal seal. The root canal is only the first step. Treatment is not complete until the crown is placed.**