



## ROOT CANAL THERAPY POST OPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS

### **What should I expect after my root canal?**

Your tooth and its surrounding gum tissues may be somewhat tender for several days. This is a result of the infection that brought you into our office, as well as the endodontic manipulation during treatment. This is absolutely normal and is part of the healing process. You can expect your tooth to be sore for about 3-5 days. When you touch it, brush it, and chew, it will be tender. Remember: the more your tooth hurt to biting prior to the procedure, the more tender it will be after the procedure. Also, lower teeth that are retreated (with a "black spot" on the x-ray) tend to be the most uncomfortable after treatment.

Every patient is different, and there are varying levels of discomfort. Some patients may even have discomfort for longer (i.e. two weeks). As long as it lessens every day, then you are headed in the right direction. Please make sure you continue to brush and floss the area normally.

### **How should I manage my discomfort?**

To minimize your discomfort, you were given over-the-counter pain medication, prior to anesthesia [600 mg Ibuprofen or 650 mg acetaminophen]. We gave this to you to stay ahead of any discomfort. It is recommended that you continue to take the medication, if you have PAIN or NO PAIN, around the clock every 6 hours for the next 3 days [600 mg Ibuprofen or 650 mg acetaminophen]. A good way to remember this is to take a dose, *with food*, at morning, noon, dinner, and bedtime. By taking your post operative medications in this manner, you will keep your discomfort to a minimum. If you allow the pain to return because you skipped a dose, it will be harder to get rid of the discomfort. It's a good idea to keep your pain medication on your nightstand so that you can take a dose at night. If you sleep longer than 6 hours or skip a dose, be aware that your tooth may be more tender in the morning.

Please see the chart for dosage recommendations, based on level of pain. Start your pain medications at the Mild Pain level and increase as needed.

<b>Pain Management Medications - Take Every 6 Hours</b>
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	<b>Patients who can take NSAIDS</b>	<b>Patients who CANNOT take NSAIDS</b>
<b>Mild Pain</b>	600 mg Ibuprofen	650 mg Acetaminophen
<b>Moderate Pain</b>	600 mg Ibuprofen + 650 mg Acetaminophen	
<b>Severe Pain</b>	Follow the Moderate Pain regimen. We may need to add an antibiotic and possibly a steroid. Please contact our office.	

**Just so you know:**

*Advil or Motrin = Ibuprofen.* Do not exceed 3200 mg in 24 hours. If NSAIDS cannot be used for pain management, the tooth tends to be more sore after treatment, and healing tends to take longer.

*Tylenol = Acetaminophen.* Acetaminophen comes in two doses, Regular (325 mg) and Extra Strength (500 mg). Do not exceed 3000 mg in 24 hours. Note: Hydrocodone already contains 325 mg Acetaminophen per dose.

*Aleve = Naproxen Sodium.* We suggest taking Ibuprofen instead of Aleve because you can take Ibuprofen more often. If you prefer Aleve, please check the dosage on the bottle.

If you were given a prescription pain medication like Hydrocodone, the best way to take this is in conjunction with your over-the-counter medication. Do not stop taking the Ibuprofen or Acetaminophen. For the most effective pain management, alternate between the two medications every 3 hours. (For example: you would take your over-the-counter medication at noon, 6pm, midnight, and 6am; while the Hydrocodone you would take at 3pm, 9pm, 3am, and 9am. Your schedule will vary.)

If your pain is still too severe, please call the office for additional information and possibly a different prescription. At this time, we may prescribe you an antibiotic and/or a steroid.

**What if I have swelling after treatment, or if my pain is not going away?**

If you experience any swelling after treatment (for example, your face looks asymmetrical when you look in the mirror), or your pain is not responding to the medication, please call the office and we will prescribe you an antibiotic and/or steroid. Do not be alarmed if this happens as it sometimes can occur after treatment. This is most common in patients who have a "black spot" associated with their tooth in the x-ray. If you have been given an antibiotic, it is important that you complete every pill in your bottle, following the recommended dosage. If swelling occurs while on an antibiotic, we may have to switch your antibiotic. If you have been prescribed an antibiotic and are experiencing significant diarrhea, discontinue the antibiotic

immediately and call our office. This side effect can happen with any antibiotic, but is more common with Clindamycin. We also suggest taking a probiotic or eating yogurt when taking any antibiotic.

**What if my temporary filling falls out?**

Your tooth has been restored with a temporary filling. It is a soft filling and needs 30 minutes to harden. It is important that your tooth remains sealed between appointments. It is possible for the filling to sink a little as you chew with it. This is okay, but if you feel that you have lost a significant amount of temporary filling, please call our office during normal business hours and we will schedule a convenient time for you to come in to replenish your temporary filling. If this should occur over the weekend, this does not constitute an emergency -- please call our office the next business day.

**What should I do after my root canal is completed?**

If endodontic therapy has been initiated on your tooth, it is essential that treatment be completed. If it is not, the tooth will become uncomfortable and may eventually be lost. It is possible that your root canal may take more than one visit if it was too infected or difficult. Once the root canal is done, you will need a final restoration such as a crown, so that the tooth is properly sealed and protected.

**What if I need to speak to someone after hours?**

If you should need to speak to someone after hours, please call or email the office. For the timeliest response, call our office during normal business hours when possible. Also, if you feel like a prescription is necessary, we do ask that you try to call before 10 pm and after 8 am as these are the hours that the pharmacy is open. Have your pharmacy phone number ready and make sure to spell your name, leave your date of birth, and leave a phone number when using the after-hours service.

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