

## **Root Dressing and Root Filling Advice Sheet**

### **What is a root filling?**

A dental procedure designed to treat infection or inflammation in the centre of a tooth and its roots.

### **How does it work?**

A root filling is usually completed in two stages. During each stage we usually advise the use of a rubber dam to reduce the chance of contamination or infection.

#### **Root dressing**

- A disinfecting paste is placed in the tooth to reduce or settle an infection. A temporary filling is then placed to seal it up.
- Should the temporary filling become loose or lost, please contact us as soon as possible so it can be restored. Some wearing down of the temporary filling may occur, which is normal.
- After this appointment you may be aware of an odd taste – this is normal. You may also have a numb lip from the anaesthetic (which usually lasts about 3 hours) and some discomfort from the tooth. The discomfort should disappear within a couple of days. You should return to have the root filling placed at your next appointment.
- On rare occasions, opening the root for dressing can lead to an increase in swelling or infection. Please contact us if this happens.

#### **Root filling**

- Usually a longer appointment – to definitively seal the root(s).
- Replaces the removed nerve(s) with a sterile sealer, following thorough cleaning of the nerve chamber and root canals using small files.
- A routine filling is then required to restore the surface of the tooth. A crown or overlay is usually recommended for back teeth.
- X-rays may be taken to confirm the root filling is the correct length.
- After this appointment you may have a numb lip (from the anaesthetic). You may also have some discomfort which should disappear within a few days.

### Treatment risks

- On rare occasions, the fine single use metal files / instruments used to clean out the root nerve can fracture inside the tooth.
- Curved or fine roots, narrow root canals and previous root canal treatment increase the risk of instrument fracture.
- Fractures may require more treatment or referral to a specialist.
- Sometimes your dentist will leave a broken piece of file in place. If this is the case, the tooth will have to be monitored and further treatment remains a possibility, including removing the tooth.

### **Are treatments always successful?**

- Success rates are measured five years after the treatment and defined as the tooth being symptom free.
- Root fillings of this type are usually successful in 70 – 90% of cases – assuming we can find and negotiate the root canals.
- Success rates vary based on many complicating factors, including:
  - The presence of an abscess or infection
  - Complicated root anatomy
  - The tooth has previously been root filled.
- A tooth may still need to be removed after a procedure for reasons other than root filling failure. Examples include, but are not limited to:
  - Tooth splitting, root fracture, future dental decay.

### **Following root treatment**

- Root treated teeth can sometimes look darker than non-root treated teeth.
- Cosmetic solutions are available and can be discussed if necessary.
- Short term tenderness and soreness is normal. This is usually transient and can be controlled with painkillers.

### **Alternative treatments**

#### 1. No treatment

- This usually leads to an abscess forming and associated pain, swelling or infection. This may mean a root filling isn't possible in the future.
- Antibiotics may calm down any infection in the short term, but this is not a definitive treatment.

#### 2. Removal of the tooth

- The missing tooth can be replaced with a denture, bridge, implant, or the resulting gap left as it is (not all replacement options are suitable in every case).

*Please note – due to the length of appointments a fee will be charged if you fail to attend the appointment or cancel at short notice*

**PLEASE DO NOT HESITATE TO CONTACT THE PRACTICE IF YOU EXPERIENCE ANY PROBLEMS.**

**TEL: 01453 828327**