



Delta Dental of Washington

## Getting to the Root of the Issue

*How root canals, crowns, and composites can support your oral health*

**SEATTLE – Oct. 3, 2023** – If you experience persistent toothache or have discovered a cracked tooth, don't put off a visit to your dentist, as quick action can help prevent the issue from progressing and help alleviate pain.

"When people experience dental pain or decay, it can be daunting to figure out a plan on how to solve these issues," said Kiran Malhi DMD, a Delta Dental of Washington dental consultant. "Dental procedures like root canals, crowns and composites can be options to resolve pain and restore your damaged tooth.

According to the American Association of Endodontists, 15 million root canals are performed each year. This is an average of 41,000 root canals being performed across the country each day, making it a common solution for severe toothache, sensitivity, discoloration, swelling, and tenderness of the gums.

### What is a root canal and why do I need this procedure?

A root canal is a very common dental procedure performed when the pulp, the soft center of your tooth, becomes infected, inflamed, or the nerve has died. There are several reasons the pulp can become damaged:

- Decay due to untreated cavity
- Multiple procedures on the same tooth
- Injury to the tooth, such as a getting struck in the mouth, or a cracked tooth

They may also be needed for teeth following repeated dental procedures or for other oral trauma. Root canals are like broccoli, not everyone likes them, but they are sometimes necessary to keeping a healthy and strong smile.

Regular checkups are imperative to prevent these types of injuries from occurring. If any of these conditions go without treatment, it can lead to even more pain and the tooth can ultimately become non-vital or need to be extracted.

### What does the procedure look like?

If your dentist has recommended that you receive a root canal, you may need to schedule one or more appointments with your dental care provider to determine the best course of action. Once a plan is in place, it may only take between 30 and 60 minutes. For a larger tooth with multiple roots, it could take up to an hour and a half. During this procedure your dentist will create an opening in the top of your tooth to allow them to remove the pulp from the inside of the tooth, clean the inside of the tooth and each root canal, and then insert a temporary filling until a permanent one can be placed. After your procedure, you will need to schedule a follow-

up visit where your dentist will replace the temporary filling with a permanent one. Soreness or slight aching is normal after receiving a root canal. This can typically be managed with over-the-counter medications such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen.

Root canals are one of many procedures which can restore your teeth and will allow you to chew, smile, and talk with ease for many years to come.

To learn more about root canals and their importance, click [here](#) to watch!

Another procedure to protect weak and already damaged teeth from further breakage and decay is the placement of crowns or “caps.”

### **What are crowns, and why might I need them?**

Think of a dental cap or crown as a helmet for your tooth! Caps and crowns are different names for the same procedure and are used to prevent, protect, cover, and restore your teeth. They work to prevent infections in the tooth; protect from decay; cover any chips, missing tooth structure or cracks; and restore health to your smile. When your tooth cannot withstand normal functions, such as chewing, a crown may be necessary. These crowns, which are fitted over your individual teeth, are made from metal or porcelain to help protect from further damage.

### **What does the procedure look like?**

Crowns are made specifically for the person’s tooth; therefore, it may take several appointments to get the correct measurements and fit for your tooth. On your first visit, your dentist will look at your tooth and procure the measurements for the crown. Then, your dentist will shave down your tooth to provide a section for the crown to be placed. After your dentist takes their measurements and makes space for the crown, the information will be sent to the lab so that the crown can be made.

Once your dentist receives the customized crown, at your next appointment, your tooth will be repaired and ready for use.

“Dental crowns are a restorative procedure which have a success rate of nearly 98% over 10 years, however, they can last even longer if you take proper care of your teeth,” said Dr. Malhi.

### **What are composites, and why might I need them?**

This commonly practiced dental procedure is performed to restore tooth structure that has gone through trauma, fill a cavity, and for cosmetic reshaping. Composites provide a stable and safe option to strengthen and restore tooth decay, cracks, and fractures. They are made from a resin material to maintain a tooth-like appearance.

### **What does the procedure look like?**

Similar to the procedure performed in root canals and crowns, composites are specific and unique for each person. The first step is that your dentist will dry out the saliva surrounding the infected tooth. Once the tooth is dry, the infected area will be drilled out and the composite is placed in layers and hardened on top of your tooth. After the tooth is filled, the composite is reshaped to restore the tooth’s original appearance.

After any of these procedures, make sure you continue healthy oral habits such as brushing your teeth twice a day, flossing your teeth at least once a day, eat healthy, and schedule regular visits with your dentist.

### **About Delta Dental of Washington**

[Delta Dental of Washington](#) is the state's leading dental benefit provider, covering nearly 3 million people in Washington state and nationally. As the only not-for-profit carrier dedicated to improving oral health in Washington, Delta Dental plays a vital role extending access to care for the underserved and vulnerable populations by funding the Arcora Foundation, as well as through corporate philanthropy, and oral health advocacy – to ensure all people enjoy good oral health and overall health.

For more information about root canals, caps and crowns, visit the Delta Dental of Washington [Blog](#).