

Dept. of Dental Surgery

Editor's Pick



For days, I have been suffering from this pain at the left-side of my jaw, it disrupts my sleep and gave me a swollen cheek. I went to my dentist, it turned out that I am affected by Pulpitis, and root canal therapy was recommended. What exactly is Pulpitis? Is it a more severe form of decayed tooth? Is root canal therapy a must? From what I understand from my dentist, the pulp of my tooth will be removed and all the canals and pulp chamber are filled and sealed. Will this procedure affect my teeth function? Does it hurt, or how long does it take to recover after the treatment?



Pulpitis is painful inflammation of the tooth pulp which causes intense tooth pain and normally called toothache. The pulp contains the nerves and blood supply. Pulpitis is mainly caused by tooth decay, from trauma or multiple restorations. Pulpitis may lead to infection, in which a pocket of pus/ abscess develops at the root of the tooth. If it left untreated, it may spread to the jaw or to other areas of the body (it can be the brain or sinuses).

We can divide pulpitis into two categories:

Reversible pulpitis – This is a mild inflammation of the pulp. The symptom of reversible pulpitis is short sharp pain when having something cold or sweet to eat or drink that lasts only as long as the contact or for just a few seconds afterwards. The causes are:

- Dental decay but not yet near the nerve
- Exposed root from gum recession caused by toothbrush abrasion or periodontitis
- Dental work - having fillings or a

- crown by the dentist; even scaling if you have lots of root showing
- A fracture of the tooth that goes into dentine but not the pulp chamber
- A cracked tooth where the crack doesn't extend into the nerve.

The tooth can be saved by a simple filling.

Irreversible pulpitis – This is a severe inflammation which the pulp is unlikely to recover. The symptom pain that can last a few minutes, or even up to an hour after the stimulus (such as cold or hot) is removed, the pain can spread to your top and bottom jaws and up to your ear. Pain that disturbs your sleep repeatedly, or keeps you up all night is a more definite sign of irreversible pulpitis.

The causes of irreversible pulpitis are:

- Very deep decay that extends deep into the nerve
- Very deep fillings close to the nerve
- Destructive crown preparations on teeth that are not root filled
- Trauma- a fracture that exposes the nerve of the tooth
- A cracked tooth where the crack extends into the nerve.

The only way dentists can stop the pain is by removing the pulp via root canal treatment or extraction. If patients show signs of infection, dentists will

prescribe antibiotics to be taken orally. For your case, most likely is irreversible pulpitis and root canal treatment is recommended. The purpose of root canal treatment is to save/keep your teeth that would otherwise have been extracted. Root canal treatment is removal of the infected or inflamed pulp using small, specially designed rotary files. Often, x-rays are taken to determine the length of the root and to monitor the various treatment stages. Root canal treatment may be done in single or multiple visits depending on tooth complexity. In between treatment appointments, medication may be placed within the canals and the tooth is covered with a temporary filling.

The tooth should be restored to full shape and function by either a permanent filling or a crown, depending on how much of the tooth is left. This should be done as soon as possible as there could be a risk of tooth fracture due to biting forces.

A root-canal-treated tooth can function normally and can be maintained with routine dental care and oral hygiene measures.

You can see why it makes sense to see a dentist sooner rather than later if you get any symptoms, the dentist can pick this sort of stuff up early either on the examination routine screening x-rays. **PRIME**

Dr Raymond Lim has been at the forefront of patient-centric dental care services and professional expertise since 2005. The National University of Singapore (NUS) alumnus who received a Bachelor of Dental Surgery (B.D.S) has advanced his professional career with three years at National Dental Centre treating trauma and emergency patients and a two-year post at polyclinics as the overall in charge. His subsequent years in private practice have further spurred his passion in implantology; he was awarded Aesthetic Implant Dentistry from the University of Uclan (UK) in 2011.



Founding B9 Dental Centre in 2013, Dr Raymond has seen early success with its current group of three dental centres within the first year. Lauded for their comprehensive expertise and trusted service, B9 Dental Centre was awarded with Top 10 Special Achievement in Dental Care Awards by Promising SME 500 2014.



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