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What to Expect When You Need to Have a Root Canal

If you have been told that you need to have a root canal, you may be feeling a bit nervous or apprehensive about what's to come. Having a root canal can seem scary or painful, but if you know what to expect before, during, and after the procedure, it can help to ease your mind and make the process much easier.

Root canals are typically recommended when there is a deep and extensive infection within a tooth, which often happens because of injury or an untreated cavity. If the infection is not treated, the tooth may need to be removed completely. However, in many cases, a root canal can prevent the need for this. Root canals are meant to preserve the tooth by cleaning out the infection and sealing the surface of the tooth with a crown to prevent further infection, allowing the tooth to stay in place.

The process of getting a root canal is typically done in four steps, over two office visits.

Step One: Your dentist will administer a local anesthesia. You may feel a pinch when the needle goes in, but will soon be numb. A dental dam may be applied at this time to keep the tooth clean and dry while the dentist works.

Step Two: Using small tools, the dentist will make a small opening in the top of the tooth and use it to access (and remove) the diseased pulp from within the tooth. They may also shape and irrigate the chamber of the tooth once the diseased pulp has been removed. They may also apply an antimicrobial solution once the chamber is clean, to help prevent further infection and to kill any bacteria that may still be left inside the tooth.

Step Three: The chamber of the tooth is filled, often with a material called gutta percha (which is similar to rubber.) The dentist will then close the tooth's opening with a temporary filling. This ends the first dental visit.

Step Four: A few weeks later, you will return for the last step of the procedure—the application of a permanent crown. This will help keep the tooth sealed safely, and keep it strong for chewing.

Often, patients report that most difficult part of the procedure is simply keeping their mouth open for the duration of the procedure. For this reason, it's a good idea to bring a pair of headphones and your cell phone loaded up with audiobooks, podcasts, or music to help entertain you during the procedure.

To learn more, visit <https://www.govparkdental.com>.

Dr. Terry L. Brewick and his team are located in the Governor's Park neighborhood of Denver, CO and specialize in preventative, cosmetic, and restorative dentistry.

