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Post Op Instructions: After a Root Canal

Root canal therapy often takes two or more appointments to complete. After each appointment when anesthetic has been used, your lips, teeth and tongue may be numb for several hours. Avoid any chewing on the side of the treated tooth until the numbness has completely worn off.

A temporary filling or crown is placed by your dentist to protect the tooth between appointments.

Between appointments, it's common (and not a problem) for a small portion of your temporary filling or crown to wear away or break off. If the entire filling falls out, or if a temporary crown comes off, please call our office so it can be replaced.

To protect the tooth and help keep you're temporary in place:

- Avoid chewing sticky foods (especially gum).
- Avoid biting hard foods and hard substances, such as ice, fingernails and pencils.
- If possible, chew only on the opposite side of your mouth.

It's normal to experience some discomfort for several days after a root canal therapy appointment, especially when chewing. It is not uncommon for a tooth to be uncomfortable or even exhibit a dull ache immediately after receiving root canal therapy. This should subside within a few days (or even weeks). Even if you were not experiencing any discomfort prior to treatment, it is normal for you to experience some degree of discomfort for a few days after. The tenderness is normal and is no cause for alarm.

To control discomfort, take pain medication as recommended by your dentist. If antibiotics are prescribed, continue to take them for the indicated length of time, even if all symptoms and signs of infection are gone.

If you were not prescribed a pain medication by us but are experiencing pain after your appointment, we recommend taking over the counter pain medication. We recommend ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil, Nuprin) or naproxen (Aleve, Anaprox). Should you experience discomfort that cannot be controlled with pain medications or should swelling develop, please call our office.

To further reduce pain and swelling, rinse three times a day with warm salt water; dissolve a teaspoon of salt in a cup of warm water, then rinse, swish, and spit. It's important to continue to brush and floss normally.

Usually, the last step after root canal treatment is the placement of a crown on the tooth. A crown covers and protects the tooth from breaking in the future. Unless otherwise noted by the dentist, it is critical to have a crown placed on your root canal therapy treated tooth as soon as possible.

Delay in obtaining final restoration (crown) may result in fracture and/or possible loss of the tooth.

If your bite feels uneven, you have persistent pain, or you have any other questions or concerns, please call our dental office.