

# Patient Instructions after Root Canal Therapy

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If you have received this sheet, it is because you had root canal therapy performed today. Here are some instructions to make sure you take care of your tooth properly.

- 1) Sometimes root canals are done in one appointment. Other times they are done over two visits. Dr. Meiners will let you know if your root canal was finished today, or if you need a return visit.
  - If you need a return visit, it is important to the success of the therapy that it is within the timeframe that is recommended (generally 7-10 days)
  - Also, if your root canal was not completed in the first visit, your tooth has a temporary filling in it. Be gentle with this tooth in this interval as it is quite brittle.
- 2) You may eat when the numbness wears off (1.5-2 hrs), but be very gentle with the tooth that was worked on. You may want to consider mainly chewing on the other side until your tooth is completed.
- 3) If your tooth was in pain prior to starting the treatment, it may take a few days for the tooth to heal and be relieved. Give the therapy a chance to work.  
If your tooth was not in pain prior to beginning treatment (likely because the tooth was abscessed or had a deep cavity that had not begun to hurt yet), your tooth may be quite sore for a few days after the appointment. This will be alleviated with time, it may take as much as a week-ten days.
- 4) If we have written an antibiotic for you, please take the antibiotic to completion per the directions. Antibiotics have to be in your system for a specified amount of time to be successful. If you stop taking it before the prescription states, your tooth may become infected.
- 5) If we have written you a narcotic pain medication (Vicodin, Tylenol #3, etc) make sure not to take that when driving or operating machinery.
  - A good pain management regimen for times when you are driving or at work is:  
3 tablets of ibuprofen (600 mg) – which is the equivalent of One Motrin + 1 extra strength Tylenol.  
Studies have shown this combination to have nearly the same effectiveness of Vicodin without the narcotic effect.  
You could take this regimen up to 4 times a day.
- 6) If your root canal was done on a back tooth (a premolar/bicuspid tooth, or molar) and it did not already have a dental crown/cap on it, it is vital to the success of your tooth to have a dental crown/cap done as soon as possible after the root canal completion.
  - Teeth that have had root canal become very brittle and without a crown to strengthen them, are at a high risk to fracture and break. Sometimes this can lead to the tooth needing to be extracted.
  - Teeth also may need a dental “post” placed in them to reinforce the tooth as well if it was badly broken down prior to treatment. This post also helps retain your dental crown.