

Endodontists Demystify The Feared Root Canal—One Tooth At A Time

(NAPS)—When Ms. Barb Guerra went to her dentist with tooth pain, the simple words “root canal” filled her with dread. But after having the painless procedure performed, she realized her worry was for naught.

“I was pleasantly surprised when I had a root canal,” Guerra said. “I really didn’t experience any discomfort at all.”

The Fear

Misplaced fears like Guerra’s aren’t uncommon. In a new consumer survey by the American Association of Endodontists (AAE), nearly half (48.5 percent) of survey respondents said they perceived root canal treatment as “excruciatingly painful,” and ranked the treatment just below a spinal tap in terms of discomfort.

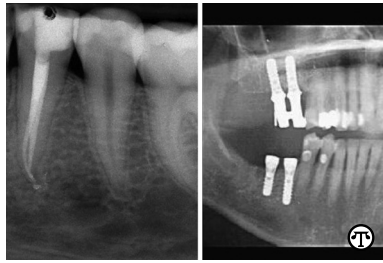
The Reality

But these perceptions don’t reflect the realities of modern treatment, something that patients are realizing firsthand.

In fact, a separate AAE study showed that patients who have experienced root canal treatment are six times more likely to describe it as “painless” than those who haven’t had the treatment.

The expertise of endodontists, the dentists who specialize in root canal treatment, combined with anesthesia and advanced technologies, have made root canal treatment a procedure that can be as routine as having a cavity filled.

The treatment usually lasts a



Radiograph of a natural tooth after root canal treatment (left) and extracted teeth replaced with dental implants (right). Courtesy of the American Association of Endodontists.

half-hour and has a 95 percent success rate in saving abscessed or infected teeth.

The Better Choice

When patients are told the interior of their tooth is badly infected and requires treatment, they have three choices: extraction of the tooth with no replacement, extraction and replacement with an implant, or root canal treatment.

Patients who extract the tooth and do not replace it can have a difficult time chewing, have an increased risk of gum disease and their teeth may shift. Extraction with implant replacement involves having a prosthetic tooth screwed into the jaw.

Root canal treatment is the only option that preserves the natural tooth. “It’s always best to save the natural tooth,” says AAE President John S. Olmsted, D.D.S., M.S. “Nothing looks, feels or func-

tions like them.”

Despite these facts, the myths surrounding root canal treatment continue—and extend beyond concerns about pain. Many people believe that root canal treatment is expensive compared to other options, when it actually costs hundreds and hundreds of dollars less than getting an implant.

Root canals generally require one visit for the treatment plus another for the placing of a crown on the tooth, whereas placing an implant typically requires multiple surgeries.

Life After Root Canal Treatment

Root canal treatment removes the damaged pulp, or soft inner tissue containing nerves and blood vessels, from the tooth, and then the endodontist cleans, fills and seals the canals. The tooth is then restored with a permanent filling or other restoration, allowing it to once again function normally, often for a lifetime.

“I had horrible pain—before I had root canal treatment,” said Guerra. “Now my tooth is pain-free.”

Guerra is just one of the 17 million people each year to have a natural tooth saved by root canal treatment—and to realize that the myths about root canal treatment just aren’t true.

For more information about root canal treatment, visit www.rootcanalspecialists.org.

Did You Know?

A survey by the American Association of Endodontists showed that patients who had root canal treatment are six times more likely to describe it as “painless” than those who haven’t. For more information, visit www.rootcanalspecialists.org.

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