



## **Instructions Following a Root Canal**

You have just had a root canal. This procedure was done to remove the infected pulp (nerve chamber), while saving the tooth.

Root canals are necessary because of damage to the sterile nerve chamber. Once this happens the nerve chamber must be cleaned, shaped, and filled so bacteria cannot return. The most common cause of this damage is bacteria from cavities. Once the bacteria enter the nerve chamber, they begin destroying the nerve and blood vessels, giving off gases and pus which create pressure, biting sensitivity and sensitivity to hot and cold. This usually starts soon after the cavity reaches the nerve chamber, but often does not hurt until after a filling or crown is placed. This is because until the tooth is sealed tightly the pressure is often released through the hole made by the cavity. Once the hole is sealed, the gases and pus exit into the bone through the end of the roots, causing a pocket of pressure. Sometimes the problems do not show up until years later. This is because your body may be destroying the infection faster than the bacteria is making it. But, as your defenses weaken or the bacteria strengthen the balance shifts in favor of the infection, making the root canal necessary.

**WHAT TO EXPECT:** After each step of the root canal the tooth or jaw may ache for a few weeks. This is because even though the cause of the infection has been eliminated, the infection itself is still present. However, since no new infection is being made, your body will destroy the existing infection in a few days. In some cases you may need an antibiotic to help your body destroy this infection.

### **THINGS TO EXPECT AS NORMAL AFTER A ROOT CANAL**

- Discomfort to biting for 2 weeks
- Discomfort in the jaw for 2 weeks
- Small pieces of the temporary filling washing out
- Some stomach discomfort from the medication (if given)

### **THINGS YOU SHOULD NOT EXPECT AFTER A ROOT CANAL**

- Discomfort lasting more than 2 weeks
- Temperature sensitivity
- Swelling of the face or jaw
- Fever
- Unusual reaction to the prescribed medication (to include itching, rash or hives, severe nausea)
- If you notice any of these, call your dentist

**WHAT NEXT?** Most teeth must be crowned (capped) after a root canal. Because the blood supply to the tooth is removed along with the nerve, the tooth becomes dry and brittle. If you do not have the crown made to hold the tooth together, there is a very good possibility the tooth will fracture. If this happens, you may lose the tooth completely.

*If you have any questions or concerns please, call **Kaminski Dental Center at 920.857.3011.***