

Tooth Talk

“Hey Doc, my tooth is killing me!! I want to save my tooth. Can you help me?”

Toothache can be one of the most painful and agonizing experiences one can encounter in life. Most common causes of a toothache include:

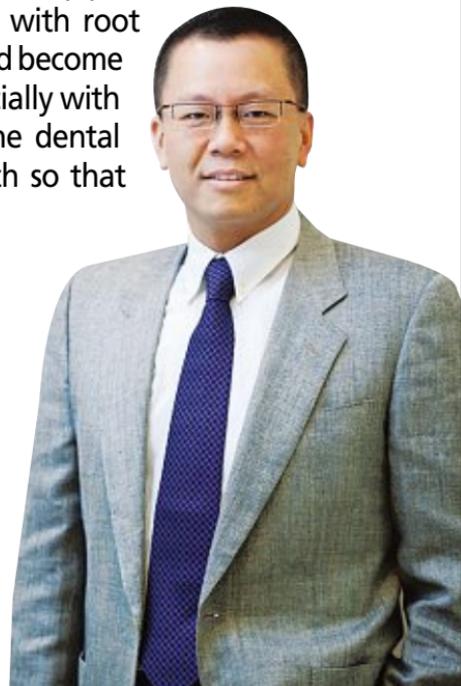
- physical irritation caused by deep decay/cavity or a very large filling
- severe gum disease

- trauma, such as a physical blow to a tooth or a constant striking of an opposing tooth that traumatizes the tooth.

Regardless of the cause, the tooth pulp(nerve tissue) becomes irritated and infected. Bacteria grows within the pulp, causing pressure and pain, sometimes accompanied by facial swelling.

As long as the tooth is not mobile and can be restored to function, root canal treatment (endodontics) can relieve the toothache and help save the tooth for the patient. Root canal treatment involves drilling a small opening/ hole through the tooth in order to access the pulp inside the root(s). Using a series of “files”, the nerve tissue inside the root canal space is removed and the empty space is enlarged, shaped, and cleaned. Different liquids/solutions are utilized to disinfect the root canal space. Once the cleaning process is completed, rubber cones are inserted into the root canal space in order to seal the root(s). Then, a permanent filling/restoration will be used to seal the opening/hole. During root canal treatment, there is no pain or discomfort involved as the tooth is usually numbed by local anaesthetic. The tooth can develop slight discomfort or tenderness afterwards due to being worked on or irritated by the procedure. However, the tooth usually settles down in a few days.

After a tooth has received root canal treatment, it will become dry and more brittle as there is no more blood supply to the inside of the tooth to keep it moist. Therefore, it will be more susceptible to fracture. In most cases, a crown, also called a cap, is recommended to help protect the tooth from breaking. Also, a tooth with root canal treatment can discolour over time and become dark. If this colour change happens, especially with a front tooth, “internal” bleaching at the dental office can be utilized to whiten the tooth so that the patient can restore his/her nice smile.



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