

# After Root Canal Therapy

## Commonly Asked Questions

There can be a wide range of symptoms that patients experience after root canal therapy. These symptoms can differ between individuals and even from tooth to tooth in the same individual.

### What can I expect afterwards?

Most patients report that the bone around the treated tooth feels sore or "bruised" and may be tender to even slight pressure. The tooth itself can no longer feel hot or cold temperatures. It is normal to have discomfort for 4-5 days following root canal therapy. 10% of patients may experience a flare-up of symptoms peaking on the 3rd or 4th day following treatment. After the first week pain medication should no longer be needed. It is best to avoid chewing on the tooth until a permanent filling and/or crown has been placed by your dentist.

### What medications can I take to relieve discomfort?

Anti-inflammatory medications (IBUPROFEN, ASPIRIN, ALEVE) typically work best on soreness following root canal therapy and should be taken first if you are able. Anti-inflammatory drugs are excellent pain relievers and help to prevent the inflammation that causes pain.

We recommend **ADVIL** (ibuprofen). Over the counter tablets are 200mg each. You may take up to 3 tablets or **600 mg every 6 hours with food**. Please take an initial dose before your numbness or anesthesia wears off. Then take as needed after that. It is easier to "stay ahead" of discomfort with regular doses during the first few days rather than waiting until it becomes more pronounced.

**DO NOT TAKE ADVIL IF YOU ARE ALLERGIC TO IBUPROFEN OR ASPIRIN OR HAVE BEEN TOLD NOT TO TAKE IBUPROFEN BY YOUR DOCTOR.** Patients with peptic ulcers or who are taking blood thinners, e.g., Coumadin or Plavix should not take ibuprofen unless advised by their physician. Pregnant women may **NOT** take ibuprofen in their 1st and 3rd trimesters. Always consult your OB/GYN before taking any medication.

**If you are taking a prescription anti-inflammatory drug** such as Celebrex, Vioxx or Naproxen or OTC Aleve for arthritis or chronic pain, ibuprofen may be substituted during the acute period of pain. Once dental symptoms subside, you may discontinue the ibuprofen and resume the regular dose of the prescribed medication.

**IF PAIN IS PRESENT AFTER TAKING IBUPROFEN, ONE OF THE FOLLOWING MEDICATIONS MAY BE ADDED. The combination will provide more effective pain relief.**

**Regular Strength Tylenol** (acetaminophen): Take 2 tablets every 6 hours. This is ideal to add to Advil when there is insufficient pain relief with the ibuprofen alone or if it is wearing off too soon.

**A prescription narcotic** such as Tylenol with codeine, Vicodin, or Percocet. One of these may be taken as directed if moderate to severe pain is present after taking 800 mg of Advil.

**If you are unable to take ibuprofen, take either 2 tablets of Regular Strength Tylenol for mild to moderate pain OR the recommended dose of narcotic for more severe pain.** Both contain Tylenol and may

not be taken together. You should take no greater than **3000 MGS TOTAL of acetaminophen in a 24 hour period.**

#### **Narcotic precautions**

If you are taking a prescription narcotic, you should not drive or operate heavy machinery. Only take this medication when you are able to rest at home. Do not take this medication with other drugs that cause drowsiness such as alcohol, sleeping pills or nighttime cold medications. Constipation and/or nausea may occur. Therefore, it is important to take the medication with food and plenty of water.

Thank you for trusting us with your care. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact our office.

**Please remember to follow up with your dentists to have the temporary filling on the biting surface of your tooth replaced with a permanent seal. This should be done ideally in 2-3 weeks and NO LATER than 6-8 weeks after root canal therapy.**